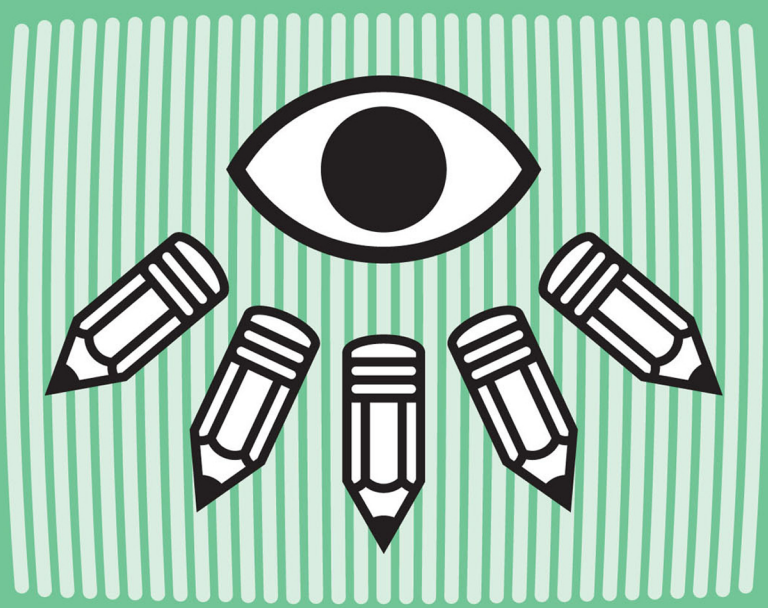
Screenwriting



Creative labor and professional practice

Bridget Conor

ROUTLEDGE

Screenwriting

Screenwriting: Creative labor and professional practice analyzes the histories, practices, identities and subjects that form and shape the daily working lives of screenwriters.

Author Bridget Conor considers the ways in which contemporary screenwriters navigate and make sense of the labor markets in which they are immersed.

Chapters explore areas including:

- screenwriting histories and myths of the profession
- screenwriting as creative labor
- screenwriters' working lives
- screenwriting work and the how-to genre
- screenwriting work and inequalities

Drawing on historical and critical perspectives of mainstream screenwriting in the USA and UK, as well as valuable interviews with working screenwriters, this book presents a highly original and multi-faceted study of screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice.

Bridget Conor is a lecturer in the Department of Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King's College London and previously taught at Goldsmiths College and AUT University in Auckland. She has published in the areas of screenwriting research and creative labor studies and her previous work focused on the production of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in New Zealand.

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Introduction

Setting the scene

Screenwriting is a form of work routinely characterized as riven by the unassailable dichotomy between craft and creativity. In professional discourse and in popular culture, screenwriting is often framed and represented as the least creative form of writing due to a number of reasons; from its unashamed rigidity of form to its unapologetic commercial obligations; from its inherent collectivity that downplays and denies claims to individual creative authorship to its invisibility in comparison to other kinds of writing or filmmaking. This book analyzes screenwriting as creative labor. By doing so it offers a new and multi-faceted reading of screenwriting and of creative labor and makes a series of explicit analytical connections between screenwriting, creative labor and what has been termed the 'new cultural economy'. Screenwriting as creative labor is an instructive case study precisely because it problematizes notions of creativity, craft and authorship as they are practiced and experienced.

Screenwriting is not a new form of creative labor and it has a long and particular history of professional practice. It has certainly changed over time and from industry to industry, and screenwriting requires particular modes of work, calculations and navigations across markets and locations. This kind of cultural work has always been immersed within, and been part of, a capitalist-intensive system of creative production that has contributed to its problematic claims to artistic legitimacy. Screenwriting within the mainstream Hollywood and British film industries in the contemporary moment demands complex forms of subjectivity in order to distinguish it from other forms of filmmaking and writing, and to make the work knowable and do-able. It is characterized by isolation and collaboration, industrial awareness and entrepreneurialism, egotism and insecurity, inequality and hierarchization. This book examines all of these features of labor and of practice, at the level of both industry and the subject, with a view to understanding what makes screenwriting so appealing for those who do it, or for those who wish to do it. This book is also interested in what screenwriting can tell us about the experiences of creativity at work more generally.

First, how can screenwriting be distinguished from other kinds of cultural production? Screenwriting work bridges the discrete categories of 'writing' and 'filmmaking' and what is interesting when trying to define screenwriting work is

the porosity of these roles, the ways in which this profession interacts with other types of work: directing, producing, playwriting, fiction writing and journalism. Many people who define themselves as screenwriters also define themselves as other kinds of writers, or as writers in different mediums, or as producers as well as screenwriters, or as screenwriting teachers and script consultants or script readers. Thus, many workers are adjacent to screenwriting and to scripts as well as directly engaged in screenwriting work at different points in their career. This book will illustrate this porosity. From histories of early screenwriting in Hollywood to contemporary accounts of screenwriting work from London-based writers, to accounts of the profession from screenwriting manuals, screenwriting is consistently framed as inherently multivalent. Screenwriters often practice a number of these modes of creative production simultaneously but screenwriting is understood as offering a number of particular attractions and benefits: form and structure, craft and collaborative possibilities. It is also viewed as illustrating particular problems. It is generally framed, for example, as much less powerful than other adjacent roles such as producing and directing. Even other forms of writing are seen as placing the writer in a much more central and visible creative role. Playwrights are involved and visible in the whole lifecycle of a theatrical production process and novelists clearly exercise a large amount of named and visible creative autonomy. But screenwriting is regarded as particular and marginal in this respect. Screenwriters are often much less visible, are openly barred from film sets or other screen production processes, are framed as 'hired hands' or replaceable cogs in the capitalist-intensive entertainment industries. Unlike auteur directors, they are not the subjects of retrospectives at film festivals and they are not viewed as creating fully autonomous art forms. Instead they are viewed as blueprint generators, or in extreme cases, as formula-driven 'hacks'. Understanding screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice is about understanding these complexities and limits, because these determine who has access to screenwriting work and how that work is experienced.

Screenwriting as creative labor is framed and analyzed in a number of ways in this book, using various methods and sites of analysis. It does not encompass all the possible definitions of screenwriting, nor the very many different experiences of screenwriting that are discernible across transnational screen production spaces. In order to carve out a manageable terrain of analysis, this account is restricted in relation to how screenwriting work is defined and understood. First, screenwriting work in this book is mainstream screenwriting work for film and television and is thus industrial and Anglophone, focused on experiences and understandings of screenwriting in the UK, the USA and, to a lesser extent, in other Anglophone markets. Screenwriting work in this book means writing for more than one medium and more than one market, often simultaneously. It concerns writers who are based in London but have North American agents and guild representation, or Hollywood writers of the 1930s who traveled to the UK to write for film, or screenwriters who write television for a regular pay check, as well as feature film scripts on the side as 'passion

projects'. Again, screenwriting work here is characterized by a porosity of movements and mediums, but it *is* industrial and market driven. Screenwriting work in this book is both historical and contemporary and it encompasses and embodies both continuity and change.[1] Screenwriting work in this book is not only about the scripts themselves, or about screenwriters' daily working patterns and lives, although it is very much about those things. Screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice is also determined by and constructed within how-to screenwriting manuals, seminars and the advice of 'gurus'. And screenwriting is also about the exercise of discipline and power and thus it is exclusionary, hierarchized and gendered. It is a profession that is accessible to very few and is circumscribed and delimited in many ways.

There are clearly problems with and limitations to this kind of Anglocentric analysis; primarily it could simply be the assumption that screenwriting *means* screenwriting for Hollywood films. But there are some good reasons for this focus. Primarily, this book is concerned with experiences and understandings of creative labor within the 'new cultural economy', Hollywood screen production being a paradigmatic example of this new cultural economy, as Chapters 1 and 2 will demonstrate. Also, the study of industrial screen production now means the study of transnational or globalized screen production industries and as writers such as Christopherson (2008), Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell and Wang (2005) and Scott (2005) effectively argue, screen production is now fully global in terms of finance, technology, locations of production and the 'new international division of cultural labor' (or NICL) as Miller *et al*. conceptualize it. Thus, this book is interested in what screenwriting for transhistorical and transnational screen industries looks like, who is most likely or able to do this work, for which industries the work is likely commissioned, funded and performed and from which spaces and places. Screenwriters in this book have written scripts for film and for television, have written how-to screenwriting manuals, and have written across these sites and mediums simultaneously and at different points in their careers. They have written in the context of the proliferation of platforms and pipelines for screen storytelling, from new transnational television producers to online and on-demand content providers.

Screenwriters whose voices are present here include many early screenwriters, 'pioneers' of this professional practice who worked in the UK, the USA, Europe and, sometimes, in other Anglophone markets. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, Anita Loos was one of the most successful female screenwriters working in Hollywood with 'name' directors such as D. W. Griffith and Douglas Fairbanks. A self-described 'combination flapper-authoress' (see Holliday 1995: 301), Loos provides many lively descriptions of screenwriting work on a studio lot at this time: 'Well it was a great big romp, really … I was doping out plots, sitting around with the producer – D.W. Griffith or Fairbanks or various directors – and doping out plots' (ibid.: 162). This account reinforces one perspective on screenwriting work that is present and articulated in many ways in this book: it is playful, fun and collaborative.

In contrast to Loos' upbeat framing, here is a different characterization of a very contemporary form of screenwriting work: 'It's not like we're working in a coal mine – you can't get black lung from writing jokes but rest assured, E! will try to find a way … ' (Writers Guild of America West 2013b). This statement comes from Bryan Cooke, a screenwriter recently on strike from his screenwriting job on the E! Entertainment channel program *Fashion Police*. This work, as he notes, is not unskilled, blue-collar drudgery, it's simply 'writing jokes', a description not dissimilar to Loos' description of writing as 'doping out plots'. But unlike Loos' take on life writing on a Hollywood studio lot, Cooke speaks of a very different work world. He has been working in what is now termed 'unscripted programming' for a production company and an entertainment corporation that denies a script is even necessary, pays by the hour or per joke, does not pay overtime and, as Andrew Ross (2004: 137) describes it, is pursuing and achieving 'the long-standing capitalist dream of stripping labor costs to the bone'. Here is another perspective on screenwriting work that this book investigates: it is isolating, difficult and degrading.

This book does not purport to offer any definitive account of all these complex industrial developments and individual accounts but it offers one multi-sited study of how screenwriting as creative labor is now experienced and understood within this professional milieu. It does not, therefore, look in detail at alternative or 'independent' forms of screenwriting as they are now and have been practiced – screenwriting that might develop from practices of improvisation for example, or immersive forms of storytelling practice.[2] But overall, screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice as it will be analyzed here illustrates the interconnections between craft and creativity, between individualized and collaborative creative work, between creative autonomy and corporate control, between inclusion and exclusion, between what Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) would call 'good' work – the playful romping that Anita Loos describes – and 'bad' work – the struggles of Bryan Cooke and his fellow joke writers for recognition and fair remuneration.

Problematizing the term 'creative'

This book is concerned with screenwriting as a form of creative labor and, thus, the professional practices that mark out this work as distinctive. Chapter 2 will fully discuss theories of creative labor as they can be applied to this case study but, by way of a fuller introduction, it is important to consider the consequences and limitations of using these two words together: 'creative' and 'labor'. To do so is to specify that screenwriting (or any case study) *is* creative (at least most of the time) and *is* work rather than simply amateurish or a dream for those who aspire to big-screen fame and fortune but will most likely never achieve it. This book argues for the importance of considering screenwriting as creative labor, but what consequences might the foregrounding of the term 'creative' have for this kind of study?

Simply using the phrase 'creative labor', and singling out screenwriters as creative workers as this book does, raises a series of important questions: what is creativity? By designating a whole swathe of disparate occupations as 'creative', does this necessarily create a corresponding 'uncreative' category and how on earth are such designations philosophically or practically made? Is 'everyone creative' as one early creative industries policy document stated (see McRobbie 2001)? And therefore, is it true that 'everyone's a writer' as the screenwriting guru Syd Field (1994) states? Negus and Pickering (2004: 4) discuss the origins of an organicist form of the term 'creativity', noting that:

> It distinguishes the artist as someone whose 'inner' voice emerges from self-exploration, and whose expressive power derives from imaginative depth. Artistic creativity has become synonymous with this sense of exploration and expressive power. As a form of radical subjectivism, it neglects other modes of creativity, such as the creativity sparked by dialogue and collaboration, or the creativity in popular cultural traditions.

Negus and Pickering explicitly tie this organicist definition of creativity long dominant within Western, Romantic thought to the concept of the individual and to corresponding terms that, as Chapters 1 and 2 will more fully explore, have been politically mobilized within the neoliberal 'new cultural economy' in the last decade, terms such as imagination, innovation and originality.[3] For Banks and Hesmondhalgh (2009: 416) it is still reasonable to broadly define 'creative', 'cultural' or 'artistic' labor as labor organized under approximated 'craft' conditions:

> This implies a cooperative model of capitalist production inherited from pre-modern guilds where workers were allocated their role in discrete labor hierarchies, based on traditional, small-scale and skilled handicraft production (Hauser, 1999). It is widely observed that creative or artistic production has largely retained this craft basis since it is the most appropriate means through which demonstrably new, original or creative commodities can be generated.

For Banks and Hesmondhalgh, the Romantic discourses of the production of art ensured that 'artistic-creative' labor was and continues to be 'concrete and named', authentic and unable to be subsumed within mass, assembly-line type production processes. Thus they define 'creative labor' as that work which 'is geared to the production of original or distinctive commodities that are primarily aesthetic and/or symbolic-expressive, rather than utilitarian and functional (Hirsch, 1972)' (ibid.).

Importantly, the term 'craft' is integrated here, which is more often than not separated out from notions of creativity in screenwriting work in order to distinguish it from other, more arguably high-minded, artistic and literary forms of writing. Sennett (2008), in his discussion of craftsmanship, associates craft

with 'good work' or a sense of a job well done. For Sennett, a trained skill contrasts with a 'coup de foudre' or the divine inspiration associated with creativity per se. He writes that training and repetition in craftwork leads to the 'bedding in' of tacit knowledge that can then inform processes of creation (2008: 37). Sennett also argues that craftsmanship is much more widely practiced than artistry and that there is no art without craft; for him, the two impulses cannot be separated out. He goes on to write:

> Art seems to draw attention to work that is unique or at least distinctive, whereas craft names a more anonymous, collective, and continued practice. But we should be suspicious of this contrast. Originality is also a social label, and originals form peculiar bonds with other people.
>
> (ibid.: 66)

The terms 'creativity' and 'craft', in working life, and in screenwriting, are in much closer alignment than is often expressed in discussions of creativity, as subsequent chapters will illustrate. As Banks and Hesmondhalgh (2009) and Sennett (2008) make clear, creativity and craft are intertwined. Creative production is ideally organized under communal, craft conditions and forms of craft are integral to the ways that cultural goods such as screenplays and films are produced. Creativity here is not privileged as individual, imaginative and mysterious although it may often be constructed as such, in screenwriting manuals for example. It is as much a collective and collaborative set of production dynamics that fuel originality and innovation in any realm of cultural production.[4] In this book then, the complex relationship between experiences and discourses of craft and creativity are a key theme, as are the corresponding connections between individualized and collaborative forms of work and practice.

Additionally, what is often highlighted in contemporary discussions of creative labor is a pleasure/pain or seductive/destructive duality of creative work, as if this work has a particular claim to this double-edged sword. The use of these kinds of dualities often acts as a privileging mechanism, offering up creative labor as deeply and inherently more satisfying and pleasurable as well as more troubling and anguishing than dirty, rote, unskilled craft- or manufacturing-based work. Bryan Cooke's earlier statement does some interesting rhetorical work in this respect. Not only does it express his frustration at his former employer (he and his fellow striking writers were all quickly 'replaced', see Kohen 2013), but it pits one kind of work against another, the head versus the hand. Screenwriting, he implies, is far from the work of a coal miner. By combining the terms 'creative' and 'labor' then, this kind of project or discourse can generate or renew social hierarchies in relation to work and can wholly deny or downgrade those hierarchies. For example, studies of creative labor have only recently begun to interrogate the exclusionary dynamics of particular creative sectors, the ways in which inequalities are reinforced, even deepened, and often denied or made 'unspeakable' as Rosalind Gill (2011) terms it. In this book, as

well as a focus on the connections between creativity and craft and individual and collaborative work practice, the inclusions and exclusions that frame and determine screenwriting work are another key orientation. Screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice is also exclusionary and gendered, it is an industry available and accessible to very few, and this has very real and disturbing consequences for the possibilities for 'good' work in this field.

Studies of creative labor like this one might also be prone to the self-mythologizing of cultural workers themselves and to certain cheerleading accounts of the creative industries from governments and policymakers that are outlined in Chapter 2. This critique is laid out by Mato (2009) who argues that 'all industries are cultural' and questions the prevailing cultural industries scholarship, which privileges film and television production over toy or garment production for example. Mato argues that it is at the myriad point(s) of consumption that products (and arguably any products) can be analyzed as cultural as well as material entities. Miller (2009) agrees that Mato's question is an important one but rebuts with his own: 'Are all industries primarily cultural?' He argues that Mato's assertion in fact also sits very closely alongside neoliberal and celebratory creative industries discourses that de-contextualize terms such as 'creativity' in order to mobilize them 'through the neo-classical shibboleth of unlocking creativity through individual human capital' (Miller 2009: 94). So just as a study of screenwriting as creative labor could be argued to be unintentionally aligned with those who fetishize creativity and hierarchize 'creative' occupations, the opposite tendency is just as visible: the assertion – through picking particular occupations and arguing they are creative or cultural – that *anything* can be creative, that anything which turns a profit can be creative and cultural. Miller finishes by saying:

> We need to analyze all these economic sectors, and recognise that each has cultural elements. But because culture involves all the questions of managing populations and coping with a life after manufacturing, its specificities need to be asserted and maintained.
>
> (2009: 97)

The arguments outlined here around definitions of 'creative labor' and the theories that have spun out from them illustrate the usefulness of this area of study and the need for the development of our theoretical, methodological and empirical tools in this kind of analysis. This study, of screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice, is designed to contribute to this broader project, not by offering a definitive set of definitions or experiences, but by illustrating some of the complexities, contestations and exclusions of screenwriting work. It is also focused on the specificities of this field, as Miller calls for. It illustrates the particular experiences, the particular discourses, the particular subjects that frame and determine screenwriting work and have done so since its earliest days. And by doing so, and by analyzing not only the daily lives of screenwriters but also histories of the profession, the construction and the

disciplining of screenwriting work in screenwriting manuals, and the inequalities of the profession, this book is designed to offer a broader set of insights about how creative work is framed, understood and experienced today.

Creativity and gender

There is one more facet of this book that needs introducing and this is one that permeates all our readings of screenwriting, of film theory and screen production, and of creative labor studies, although it is not always acknowledged. Screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice in this book also means the study of inequality and exclusion, especially in relation to gender. It is important to state here that although gender inequalities are the primary focus, this study uses an intersectional framework that recognizes that inequalities in creative work and screenwriting are not *only* gendered inequalities but are inequalities of gender that intersect with inequalities of ethnicity, age, and educational and class background (for more see Lutz, Vivar and Supik 2011, for example). The screen production industries have, from their earliest days, been deeply unequal. The voice of Anita Loos, one of early Hollywood's most successful screenwriters, was presented earlier as an example of screenwriting work as playful and collaborative but this framing masks other features of screenwriting work. Loos was working at a time in which there were few women screenwriters, in an industry in which women's labor was often invisible, unacknowledged or denigrated. The structural organization of screenwriting labor markets, and the old and new kinds of laboring practices within them, have served to entrench, even deepen, these inequalities. Chapter 5 will discuss the statistical evidence in much more detail but to indicate the scale of this issue, 91 percent of the British film workforce between 2004 and 2010 were white (British Film Institute 2012), the same statistic as the US workforce between 2003–7 (Writers Guild of America West 2009). Seventy-eight percent of employees and 61 percent of freelancers in the UK film production industry in 2011 were men (British Film Institute 2012) and these white, male writers also earned more than women and minority writers (see Writers Guild of America West 2009).

The neoliberal 'new cultural economy' in which screenwriters now function, in modes that are often both highly individualized and wholly collaborative, is also gendered and unequal. In a discussion of post-feminism and the ways in which this can be linked to neoliberal media and economic organization, Gill and Scharff (2011: 7) ask: 'Could it be that neoliberalism *is always already gendered*, and that women are constructed as its ideal subjects?' (original emphasis). As many theorists have argued in recent and important feminist interventions,[5] it is now women who are primarily called upon to 'work' on themselves, to be 'top girls' as McRobbie (2009) puts it. It is often via the representative strategies of media texts of many kinds, including film and television, that women are 'hailed' as ideal, neoliberal subjects. Yet women continue to have much less access to those representational strategies, to the

conception and production of media, as the above statistics clearly indicate. Ball (2012: 250) again citing McRobbie, directly ties neoliberal, entrepreneurial discourses of success and meritocracy, those discourses that circulate so fluidly within how-to screenwriting manuals for example, to gender inequalities:

> Discourses of success circulating in culture privilege neoliberal discourses of choice and individualism, and evade [what McRobbie 2004: 261 calls] 'deep and pernicious' gender inequalities that continue to affect women in differently situated positions such as those of class, age and ethnicity.

In neoliberal creative markets that require entrepreneurialism, fierce individualism and self-responsibility, the traditional language of equity is 'narrow and anodyne' as Allen puts it (2013: 237) and structural inequalities are 'individual, private problems, to be overcome by hard work, choice and self determination' (ibid.). Not only is neoliberalism always/already gendered, but creativity is also always/already gendered and specifically deployed as such in the cultural and creative industries. And the study of screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice must also include the study of the ways in which screenwriting is gendered and unequal. In Chapter 5, both the structural and subjective dimensions of inequality for screenwriters are analyzed, drawing on Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) performativity theory in order to understand, as Proctor-Thomson (2013b: 139) puts it, the ways in which 'gender relations embedded in the material practices, processes and structures of cultural work are produced through the sedimentation of repeated discursive practices'. Taylor (2011) and Taylor and Littleton (2012) have offered recent and powerful accounts of creative identity and gendered orientations towards (and away from) creative work. Taylor (2011) argues that dominant constructions of contemporary creative work and creative workers privilege a masculine 'selfishness' that conflicts with gendered positionings of women as other-oriented and attending to the needs of others. In a similar vein, Allen (2013: 235) writes that 'gendered constructions of the "creative person" privilege attributes associated with a model of strident and assertive masculinity – "hard skin", independence, competition, determination and rationality – operating to exclude women from particular roles in the sector'. And other paradigms for analysis that this book draws on are imbued with gendered norms. As Ball and Bell (2013: 551) note in their recent and important discussion of women's production histories in the UK, traditional film and auteur theory (outlined in Chapter 2), practices of film history (some of which are discussed in Chapter 1) and the archiving and cataloguing of film and television, are *all* deeply gendered practices, which mean that women's labor is often invisible within them. If screenwriting work is already considered to be marginal and invisible because of its dubious claims to creative and literary status, then women's screenwriting work is arguably even more prone to invisibility. This book is thus also concerned with the ways these invisibilities and exclusions fracture the industrial and subjective experiences of screenwriting.

Methodological approaches for creative labor studies

This project, as it developed over many years, incorporated a number of methodological approaches and forms of data analysis and was shaped by issues of access, reflexivity and positionality. In the chapters that follow, a variety of source material is used, from histories of mainstream screenwriting, to theories of creative labor and cultural production, to how-to screenwriting manuals. The empirical material used is also drawn from a number of sources including those above, as well as from 17 interviews conducted with screenwriters, screenwriting teachers, screenwriting consultants and others who work with screenwriters (producers and script editors for example), in London between 2007 and 2009. Seven women were interviewed across these occupations, and ten men.[6] All these interviewees were 'professional creatives', using Ryan's (1991) terminology (for more see Chapter 2). While some classed themselves as 'writer-directors', most did not initiate projects or exert named creative control over those projects. Some were able to support themselves through their writing work but others supplemented their income in a variety of ways (teaching, script editing, seminar hosting, etc.) and many had seen one or two of their works produced.

Within the general field of critical cultural studies, contemporary theorists have routinely utilized qualitative research strategies including interviews to foreground working lives and subjectivities in post-Fordist labor markets and influential work ranges across a wide number of fields: Hochschild's study of emotional labor in service work (2003), McRobbie's study of British fashion design workers (1998), Gill's (2002) and Ross's (2004) studies of new media workers, Gregg's study of white-collar knowledge work (2011) and, more recently, Hesmondhalgh and Baker's large-scale study of creative workers in television, music and magazine journalism (2011). A few particularly influential studies are worth highlighting here, studies that make clear the issues around access and reflexivity that come with examining quite 'closed' work worlds such as the entertainment industries. The 'integrated cultural-industrial analysis' of J. T. Caldwell (2008) in his far-reaching examination into industrial reflexivity and critical practice in film and television production is one important methodological model for this book. Caldwell explicitly follows Clifford Geertz' call for interpretive anthropology, reading 'over the shoulder' of film and television workers, facilitating a dialogue between macro- and micro-analyses of film and television production. Ortner (2009) also offers a very helpful reading of what she terms 'interface ethnography', a strategy for conducting qualitative research within a production community like filmmaking within Hollywood, which is often closed or hostile to academic research. She discusses, for example, attending public events during her research such as film screenings, question and answer sessions, festivals and production expos, and whilst she initially saw these as only 'ethnographic supplements' to the more-important interviews, she notes how crucial they eventually became for understanding 'the business' and learning the language of the industry. These kinds of spaces and sites for

data gathering are, as Caldwell (2009) terms it 'cultivation rituals'. Ortner draws on Laura Lader's term 'studying up' but instead uses the term 'studying sideways', which, she argues, acknowledges 'the relative complicity between us and our informants, and which also acknowledges our own elite status more fully' (Ortner 2009: 184; see also Mayer 2008).

As Chapters 1, 2 and 5 will particularly indicate, this project also involved a large amount of supplementary research via published interviews with screenwriters, labor market and statistical data and online resource gathering from screenwriting blogs and fora. Interviewing and interviews of different kinds play a more central role in this analysis (especially in Chapters 3, 4 and 5) than some other studies of film and television production because participant observation was not as viable a possibility for supplementary data gathering. Unlike the film and television production workers observed and interviewed for other studies of creative labor in the UK (such as Blair's 2001, 2003 and Ursell's 2000), screenwriters work both in isolation and in highly restricted and closed collaborative encounters. In this study, there was much 'studying sideways' in order to learn screenwriting and scripting languages, to understand how screenwriting was constructed and taught and to observe the ways in which screenwriters calculate and navigate their careers. This meant that fieldwork also consisted of attending events in and around London such as screenings and question and answer sessions, screenwriting seminars hosted by screenwriters or screenwriting teachers and gurus, and large-scale public events such as film festivals. This study also makes extensive use of online fora – screenwriters' blogs, published and broadcast interviews with screenwriters in relation to their recently released films and news coverage about ongoing stories related to the topic area, such as the aftermath of the 2007–8 US writers' strike. This project is not 'virtual' in any substantive sense but it is important to acknowledge how crucial particular online sources now are for screenwriters both aspiring and established. Online fora are increasingly important for the international screenwriting community in terms of labor organization, community building, advice giving and ongoing debate (see Banks 2010), and in Chapter 3 and the conclusion to this volume there is some further, explicit discussion of new online and networked spaces for screenwriting work and workers.

Structure of this book

This book begins in Chapter 1 with a discussion of the historical dynamics of screenwriting as creative labor. It examines some of the canonical Hollywood histories of screenwriting, the ways in which those translate or differ from British histories, and the ways in which this profession and its practices for mainstream screen production were constructed, standardized and hierarchized over time. Chapter 2 then introduces various theoretical paradigms for analyzing screenwriting as creative labor from cultural studies, sociology, political economy and film theory. In this early part of the book, the focus is on how screenwriters have mythologized and self-theorized about their work. Histories

of the profession illuminate a mythic figure of the screenwriter, encompassing a number of diverse laboring identities – pioneer, maverick, egotist, masochist, geek. This historical account is also attendant to exclusions and absences, to those who are not present or visible, especially women. Chapter 2 offers a complex theorization of screenwriting as creative labor that is particular to all these dynamics, but which is not closed or final, and is also attendant to continuities and to continued, perhaps even deepening, invisibilities.

Chapter 3 is focused on British screenwriters' working lives, largely based on one-to-one qualitative interviews, and is concerned with how writers describe and experience the work, how craft and creativity are defined and experienced, how individual and collective forms of creativity and craft work are privileged at different moments and locations, and what implications these shifting designations have. Screenwriters and those who teach screenwriting across the fieldwork sites are followed as they calculate, navigate and make sense of the screen production labor markets in which they are immersed. For example Chapter 3 discusses the ways in which contemporary screenwriters 'speak back' to the collective history of their work and, in this sense, acknowledge and take pride in this history as one of commercial creativity, concrete craft, invisibility and liminality. Screenwriters also voice and display reflexivity and professional confidence in order to navigate their work worlds. Chapter 3 illustrates the ways in which professional horror stories are currency as much as credits are, that screenwriters employ particular strategies to navigate collaborative development and that the collective history of their work also fuels these professional practices. Screenwriters also 'speak forward' to their audiences (producers, moviegoers, teachers, students, financiers and so on) and thus juggle many forms of political and social talk in pursuit of secure and rewarding creative work.

Chapter 4 focuses on the ways in which screenwriting labor is constructed and taught within how-to screenwriting manuals and, more broadly, the how-to genre. Manuals about how to be a screenwriter and interview collections with 'successful' screenwriters about their work are ubiquitous but offer little systematic analysis of the histories, practices and identities that form and shape the daily working lives of screenwriters. After building up this systematic analysis in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, Chapter 4 draws on textual and discourse analysis of a selection of the most popular how-to screenwriting manuals, as well as data drawn from interviews with writers. This chapter examines the ways in which the how-to genre concretizes and regulates the profession through a particular set of hegemonic codes and conventions – structure, characters, conflict, entrepreneurialism and precariousness. It also examines the ways in which screenwriters use screenwriting manuals and the how-to industry in their daily working lives.

Chapter 5 maps out the contemporary socio-economy of the screenwriting labor force in which the spectres of inequality and lack of diversity haunt the profession and have done so since its earliest days. Statistics across Anglophone screen industries consistently indicate that the majority of screenplays for both film and television are written by a very small group of mainly older white men and, in some cases, diversity is in fact declining and inequality worsening, with

the proportion of women and ethnic minorities participating in screenwriting work having decreased in both the UK and US industries in 2011 and 2012. This final chapter asks bluntly, who's in and who's out when it comes to screenwriting work? It also highlights a wider disjuncture between representations of the cultural production industries as 'cool, creative and egalitarian' as Gill (2002) critically highlights, versus the stark realities of this industry and profession.

Finally, the conclusion to this book follows on from the critical questions raised in Chapter 5, to consider, as other scholars in the field such as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) have recently done, the ethics of creative work and thus the possibilities of 'good' work for screenwriters. Banks and Hesmondhalgh (2009: 419) have argued that creative labor is uniquely positioned to enable 'good work'; that is, 'the production of goods that are often primarily aimed at pleasing, informing and enlightening audiences and in some cases, to the goals of social justice and equity'. Screenwriting work exemplifies this unique positioning by enabling, as many writers acknowledge, the chance to conceive, develop and produce better visions of the world in-script and on-screen. This conclusion will summarize the lessons learned in the preceding chapters in terms of what screenwriting – as an industrial, marginalized, individualized, collaborative and exclusionary form of work – can teach us about the possibilities and problems associated with *good* creative work.

Notes

1 For more on this, see Banks, Gill and Taylor (2013).
2 As a recent film like *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) might illustrate, or, in a different vein, a BBC television series like *Getting On* (2009–12). As an indicative example of the transnational production cultures this book will discuss, *Getting On*, a low-budget BBC program about working in the National Health Service (NHS) has been remade for the US market by BBC Worldwide Productions and HBO. See Clarke (2013).
3 Raymond Williams is also an important reference point in this tradition. His rich discussion of the 'creative mind' in *The Long Revolution* (1961) offers much more detail on the philosophical developments in the conception of creativity, from Plato onwards. For more on the neoliberalization of cultural work, see McGuigan (2010). For an excellent general account of neoliberalism as a political formation see Brown (2003) and see Duggan (2003) for an account of neoliberalism and cultural politics.
4 This point is the focus of the sociology of Becker (2008) and his 'art worlds' thesis.
5 As Chapters 2 and 4 will make more explicit, I am drawing on Foucauldian approaches to neoliberalism in this study, especially the work of Nikolas Rose (1989, 1992, 1998, 1999). For important examples of the application of this kind of framework to the analysis of postfeminist media culture and young women as self-responsible neoliberal subjects see Gill (2008), McRobbie (2009) and Scharff (2012).
6 Note that there were other forms of ethnography used at the time this data was collected, from observations of screenwriting teaching and seminars to analysis of screenwriting pedagogy. In keeping with the code of ethics that was used in conducting this research, all interviewees are referred to here via pseudonyms and, where appropriate and necessary, personal or professional details have been obscured to ensure privacy and anonymity. For more on methodological design and concerns see Conor (2010).

1 Screenwriting histories and myths of the profession

Histories of mainstream screenwriting, usually centred on the development of the profession in Hollywood, offer a number of insights into an ongoing process of standardization and mythologization on the part of the screenwriting community and commentators within this community. Often these histories come from writers themselves, and writers based in Hollywood at different points in time have contributed to the self-mythologizing process in numerous ways, through novelizations about Hollywood, often with screenwriters as central characters: Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941) for example. Particular origin stories and mythic narratives are repeated across the histories, and this process has served to solidify a particular self-perception on the part of the industrially oriented screenwriter. The crudest and most potent version of this, the degraded, deskilled, marginalized writer, is evoked repeatedly in particular on-screen portrayals of writers from *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) – in which a writer floats face-down in a swimming pool as the film begins – to *Barton Fink* (1991). A quote from the anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker is used to illustrate this in one of the few contemporary discussions of screenwriting as history and practice:

> The writers are part of the production of pictures rather than authors. A bon mot in the community is that 'writers in Hollywood do not have works, but are workers' … In Hollywood, the writer does not write to be read.
>
> (Powdermaker 1950, 150–51, cited in Maras 2009: 52)

This first chapter will echo these self-mythologizing processes by 'setting up' some of the key foundational moments – from the early years of the scenario writer and into the golden era of Hollywood filmmaking in the studio system – which have fuelled a standard historical narrative. Chapter 1 illustrates the investment that screenwriters themselves have in these histories, histories that are circulated and re-circulated in discourse; for example, in screenwriting manuals and in interviews with screenwriters from particular eras.[1] Histories of screenwriting serve as conduits for self-theorizing processes and are invested in

particular concepts – the standardization of screenwriting craft over time, the concomitant separation of craft from creativity, the brutalization and marginalization of writers, the necessary politicization and organization of screenwriters in order to tackle marginalization. These concepts are understood in the first half of this chapter as mechanisms of intelligibility for screenwriters. These mechanisms anchor screenwriting workers across a coherent, historical trajectory as their profession develops, enabling them to more deftly navigate the industrial dynamics of contemporary screen production. The chapter then moves from the early histories to a critical discussion of contemporary labor relations in Hollywood and the material and symbolic effects these changing relations have had on screenwriters as professional creatives. It compares and contrasts the US and UK labor markets for screenwriters, markets that need to be distinguished, but markets that are also intertwined. This first chapter asks: what are the patterns of continuity and change that have determined the professional parameters of screenwriting and how do they differ from place to place, industry to industry?

Early histories – defining screenwriting work and workers

The general perception gained from reading accounts of the development of screenwriting as a form of work in the pre-studio era – the era of the 'scenario writer' – is a time of a proliferation of opportunities for budding writers in which creative roles in the new industry of screen production were characterized by multiplicity and multivalency.[2] This era is viewed as one of freedom and creative ferment – scenario writers commanded prestige in this new creative field, often juggled a number of production roles, were prolific and rewarded for their originality and work ethic, and were well-treated and respected. Roy McCardell is widely cited as the first person hired for the specific job of writing for motion pictures. As the histories make clear, his career mirrors the careers of contemporary screenwriters, a rhetorical technique that establishes palpable links between past scenario writers and present screenwriters. McCardell had previously been a journalist and also wrote novels and plays. He was taken on by the Biograph Company on a salary of US$200 per week to write 'stories' and, very quickly, this led to a demand for scenario writers to write short scenarios for filming and then to the development of 'story departments' within each motion picture production company (Stempel 1988: 4). Scenario writers in the silent era also read and evaluated story material from outside sources (much like the contemporary work of script reading and assessment known as 'coverage') and early writers undertook multiple roles within the company they were contracted to. For example, Gene Gauntier, a prominent early woman writer, wrote, edited, acted, directed, made costumes, sets, and props and performed stunts. As Stempel puts it: 'For her first scenarios Gauntier was paid US$20 per reel while the director was paid only US$10, an indication of the relative value the company placed on writers and directors' (1988: 8). The figure of the early scenario writer offers a compelling central character in the origin story. Quotes

and vignettes abound that serve to illustrate the freedom and playfulness scenarists enjoyed and exhibited. Gauntier wrote in the 1920s: 'The woods were full of ideas … A poem, a picture, a short story, a scene from a current play, a headline in a newspaper. All was grist that came to my mill' (quoted in Norman 2007: 26). This is a time in which there are a large number of women working as scenario writers. In fact, Mahar argues that women 'originated the craft of screenwriting but also developed the "continuity" … ' (2001: 72–73). It is worth noting, however, that there is a disagreement about the numbers of women writing early cinema. Whilst many studies often state, without attribution, that up to 50 percent of early screenwriters were women, Slide (2012) has recently challenged this figure, arguing that a realistic figure would more likely be between 20 and 25 percent. The openness and egalitarianism of the profession in its early days is still emphasized as evidence of intrinsic freedom and flexibility but this is a characteristic of the profession that does not last (see also Francke 1994).[3]

The historical record deploys facts and figures in support of the free-wheeling scenario writer, illustrating the rapid turnaround of the work; anecdotes emphasize the dashing-out of a deluge of short scenarios and the increased demand for such work. Most stories were bought, filmed and released within three months and the high turnover created a palpable demand for story material so, by the mid-1910s, the rates of pay for scenarios were steadily increasing (Hamilton 1990: 7). By the early 1910s, the mythic narrative is already preoccupied with the theme of the standardization of the form and the work of scenarists is characterized as pioneering forms of continuous storytelling on screen. Thus, the free-wheeling writing style was rapidly normalized to a single page for a one-reel film; very basic scenes were described and typed out. There was no written dialogue but written titles were inserted between the filmed scenes in post-production. The scenarios themselves form the framework and rudimentary structure for the subsequent 'photoplay' and for the eventual standardized screenplay.

Coupled with the increase in demand for stories was a rash of books published on how to write screen stories, the very early precursors to contemporary how-to screenwriting manuals. These included Eustace Hale Ball's *Cinema Plays: How to Write Them, How to Sell Them* (1917), J. Arthur Nelson's *The Photo-Play: How to Write, How to Sell* (1913) and Epes Winthrop Sargent's *The Technique of the Photoplay*, which went through three editions from 1912 to 1920 (Stempel 1988: 14). As Chapter 4 will discuss in full, how-to discourse is central to the circulation and maintenance of standards and conventions of screenwriting labor and these early manuals illustrate that, again, this is not a recent phenomenon. This early publishing period is often referred to within the wider context of 'scenario fever', which, fed by encouragement of public submission of story ideas, facilitated 'a gold rush mentality' (Azlant 1980 cited in Maras 2009: 141) and a 'mass publication of handbooks between 1912 and 1920' (ibid.: 139). Maras (2009) argues that the first handbooks often made reference to the need to carve out a space for screenwriters, to draw borders

around their craft and thus offer some protection from hostile directors, studio executives or other villains of the time. As with contemporary titles, Maras argues that many early how-to authors invoke a sense of insider knowledge and 'the particularist impulse informing the handbook genre gives it a pedagogic quality, separating players from non-players in a broader game of industry, in which industrial knowledge belongs to a social minority' (2009: 163). Like the histories more broadly, the early development of the how-to screenwriting genre serves as a platform for the construction and teaching of scenario writing and becomes a zone of intelligibility and normativity. Here, the codes and conventions of the form, the elements of visuality that writing for the screen required, were carved out and legitimated.

A consistent theme in this early period is the perceived fluidity of roles within the film production business and particular early figures exemplify this flexibility – a flexibility that arguably (and lamentably for many writers and commentators) recedes as the rigid divisions of labor in the studio era come into focus. Processes of rationalization and standardization exemplify the inexorable movement towards increased efficiency and continuity in screen production processes. For example, Thomas Ince, a prominent writer-director of this early period, is widely cited as developing the classical narrative style of American filmmaking by emphasizing continuity in his scenario writing and in the filming process (Stempel 1988: 41). He listed scenes to be shot together and created schedules for cast and crew that other prominent directors such as D. W. Griffith had not bothered with. For Staiger (1982), Ince's continuity scripts were integral to the separation of the conception and production phases of filmmaking that exemplifies a Taylorist division of labor, and for Maras (2009) this is another theme that has shaped the particularist discourses of screenwriting. According to him, from the earliest moments in the history of screenwriting, the separation of conception and execution is a process used to differentiate screenwriting from other forms of dramatic/fictional writing. Ince's scripts were precise in their detail, including instructions on costumes, shots and blocking of actors, and Ince reportedly rubber-stamped all his final scripts, 'Produce exactly as written' (Norman 2007: 44). C. Gardner Sullivan (reportedly the highest paid screenwriter of the silent era) worked frequently with Ince and their collaborative work is cited as producing some of the first scripts that specified elements of visual composition. Hamilton (1990: 11–12) highlights one in particular:

> SCENE L: CLOSE-UP ON BAR IN WESTERN SALOON
>
> A group of good Western types of the early period are drinking at the bar and talking idly-much good fellowship prevails and every man feels at ease with his neighbour-one of them glances off the picture and the smile fades from his face to be replaced by the strained look of worry-the others notice the change and follow his gaze-their faces reflect his own emotions-be sure to get over a good contrast between the easy good nature that had prevailed and the unnatural, strained silence that follows-as they look, cut.

Lesser-known or cited in mainstream histories is Ince's chief scenario writer Bradley King, who began as a stenographer for a scenario editor in the 1910s (Holliday 1995: 45), learning 'plot construction and continuity' before working consistently with Ince in the 1920s. Crucially, Ince is also cited as ushering in a process that emphasized organization but sidelined creativity and artistic freedom. Norman writes: 'Ince took assembly-line techniques, perfected by manufacturing giants like Henry Ford, and applied them to the movie industry' (2007: 44). As the historian Karen Mahar (2001: 103) puts it, increasing efficiency and specialization also led to increased sex-typing and exclusion for women who had been able to 'force an opening' for themselves, as Bradley King described her own beginnings in the industry (see Holliday 1995: 45).[4] A mythic, usually masculine figure such as Ince is deployed to illustrate the first signs of the degradation of the screenwriter's creative process under the strictures of an industrial production system. As Staiger writes, the application of scientific management to screen production leads to a separation that 'destroys an ideal of the whole person, both the creator and the producer of one's ideas' (1982: 96).

Mack Sennett, who produced comedies for the Keystone Company, is another villainous character looming large at this time, embodying the producer-driven desire to separate out the heads and hands of his screenwriter lackeys. He hired a team of 'gag writers' but the gags conceived to be filmed were never written down. Instead they were spoken to one another and then 'pitched' to Sennett. Norman writes that 'Sennett nursed a perpetual mistrust of his writers … he built a tower on the lot with a glassed-in penthouse so he could glower down at his writers along with his other employees' and that he had an 'aversion to the written word' (2007: 58). Again, this type of anecdote is presented as evidence of Sennett's calculated strategy of degrading his writers' craft and skills and maintaining a 'collective anonymous output' in order to control both story conception and production. For Norman, this illustrates an underlying antagonism between producers and writers, a theme that can be traced right through the histories of screenwriting in Hollywood. The enlightened but vulnerable figure of the screenwriter is pitted against the brutish, efficiency-obsessed producer determined to control the outputs of their writers and to deny those outputs the 'creative' label, by effectively severing the ties between hand and head. No matter how crude these early characterizations, the rhetorical effect is to make the screenwriter intelligible as a player in the promising early days of the screen production industry. They are what Caldwell (2008: 47) refers to as 'genesis myths'. Screenwriters, embodied by the figure of the scenario writer, are mavericks and pioneers. They have the potential to command a central and multivalent position within this new realm of cultural production but they are also subordinated and almost immediately handicapped by those who recognize this potential but wish to deny screenwriters such centrality and flexibility.

By the late 1910s, independent production companies were beginning to form major studios and, for the new studio moguls, vertical integration of the production system, including control of distribution and exhibition, minimized risk

and maximized profit margins. For the heads of production, control of a project could be harnessed through the script and a strict division of labor enabled greater control over the entire production process, according to Stempel (1988: 51). Tension was mounting by the early 1920s between writers and directors (who were again being separated out within the early studio structures) and Stempel quotes William De Mille: 'the two crafts (writing and directing) became theoretically separated but never actually untangled' (1988: 56). MacDonald (2007) also emphasizes this in his discussion of British silent filmmaking from 1910 to 1930, arguing that early British screenwriters 'picturized' the films they wrote as well as dramatically structuring them (i.e. they specified shot sizes and offered instructions for actors for example), but that by the 1930s industrial practices inherited from Hollywood were 'rationalising' the dominance of the director as the principal 'author' of a film. MacDonald (2007) offers examples of the work of Elliot Stannard to illustrate this but also emphasizes the lack of primary source material for early British screenwriting, which hampers any authoritative conclusions being drawn here. He suggests, at least, that auteur theory is a problematic theoretical lens through which to examine practices of early British screenwriting.[5] Again, the theme of separation of conception and execution serves as an intelligible device, ensuring a wrenching historical account of the newly minted screenwriter as increasingly alienated from her own labor.

An additional theme that imbues these early foundational narratives is the tension between new and more established forms of authorship. This links to a wider battle for legitimacy that dominates the subsequent discourse about screenwriting as a new but marginal literary form. Screenwriters increasingly sat uneasily between the worlds of literature (theatre-writing most specifically) and filmmaking and this led to wider debates on familiar polarizing terrain: art versus commerce, craft versus creativity, artist versus hack. Many histories describe the push in this early period (led by Samuel Goldwyn) towards the hiring of well-known authors and playwrights to write screenplays in order to lend the Hollywood industry credibility as a legitimate art form. Mahar also notes that drawing on an East Coast theatrical labor pool included the hiring of both men and women from a 'relatively gender-egalitarian work culture' (2001: 85). It is made clear, however, that this was not initially a successful strategy. As Hamilton puts it: 'The eminent authors [lured from New York] complained about the cavalier way in which Goldwyn's story department handled their material; the Goldwyn actors and directors were suspicious of their boss's new valuation of the writer's status' (1990: 18).

The hiring of 'East Coast' authors had telling consequences in that the rivalry between the New York literary establishment and the burgeoning industry in Southern California with its scenario departments was firmly established. For Stempel (1988) this strengthens the developing view (implicit within the early treatment of writers by producers such as Mack Sennett) that screenwriting was (and is) not a legitimate art form. One of these 'eminent authors', Elmer Rice, is quoted in Norman (2007: 62) discussing the nature of the work:

> The absence of dialogue and the rather limited aesthetic and intellectual capacity of the mass audience for whose entertainment films were designed necessitated a concentration upon scenes of action: melodramatic, comic, erotic. Wit and poetry were of course excluded.

Schultheiss (1971) argues that the first 'wave' of writers from the East experienced a creative rupture in the shift from their theatrical roots to the new medium of screenwriting. On the one hand, this historical moment was characterized by unwillingness on the part of the authors to understand and adapt to cinematic narrative structure and devices. On the other hand, Schultheiss notes that some authors found too much room in writing for the screen, becoming 'intoxicated by the freedom of screen style' (ibid.: 15). De Mille explains this as leading to scripts in which action was often 'in danger of being entirely lost in physical movement' (ibid.). Overall, Schultheiss suggests that while this first wave of 'eminent' authors were considered unsuccessful, they injected a new rigor into the screenwriting profession and a sense that standards needed to be raised beyond the 'loose scenarios hastily scribbled by studio hacks for careless directors' (Griffiths, cited in Schultheiss 1971: 17). These early histories serve as mythic accounts of the emergence of the professional screenwriter and have proven strikingly durable.

The figure of the 'flexible' scenario writer or the Eastern author lured to Hollywood and unable to adapt to this new form of 'picture technic' quickly come to signify the particular and enduring anxieties of screenwriting work: the push and pull of words and images that necessitate new forms of visual authorship but which then complicate its literary status; the connected push and pull of notions of craft and creativity as the conventions of the screenwriting form develop; the unsettling divisions between conception and execution or between writing and directing that industrial screen production rapidly produces. As the standardization of screen production becomes more central to the origin story of the screenwriter, it is again the themes of alienation and degradation of the writer that dominate screenwriting histories.

The advent of sound in the late 1920s was a turning point that fundamentally shifted, and, as historians argue, further standardized the work and content of screenplays. Gritten (2008) discusses this in the British context, illustrating that it was within early British screenwriting manuals that struggles over 'the technique of the talkie' played out. Within Hollywood, sound use was calibrated to an already-established professional practice for screenwriters. So writing techniques developed that dealt with the new technological limitations (movement of camera and actors was restricted by the bulky recording equipment) and emphasized narrative continuity. According to Gritten, processes such as the development of dialogue writing were more contested in the UK by 'minority' filmmakers who 'attempted to forge a specific medium of storytelling based on the primacy of visual movement' (2008: 277). Sue Harper suggests that the advent of sound in the British film industry also allowed more women to pursue screenwriting work. The industry was 'in a state of disarray' she argues, and

again, the informality of this period 'opened up spaces for female professionals', although they often had to pursue more 'circuitous routes' into the industry (Harper 2000: 167–68). By the end of the 1920s, screenwriters were becoming well versed in the accepted narrative template for scripts and in the limited genres that had developed. Gritten argues there was a 'mainstream convergence in practice' in the 1930s, through screenwriting manuals in both the Hollywood and British film industries, which established and maintained a 'hierarchy of story values' – the cinematic dialogue serving the narrative arc as a whole (2008: 271). As Norman notes, a limited range of stories and settings provided an ideal economic model both in terms of the everyday needs of a production and the marketing of studio films. A single western set on the studio lot could be used again and again to produce a number of films that then fitted the expectations of an audience now used to this limited number of narrative frameworks. This also meant that the job of the screenwriter becomes straightforward, rote and predictable:

> Screenwriters learned to mould and hew their output to fit the template and to save time, and it provided the front office with a basis to judge a writer's screenplay and a vague but finite vocabulary to use when it set out to change or improve it.
>
> (Norman 2007: 64)

Processes of myth creation in Hollywood screenwriting practice also focus, at this time, on the second wave of writers from the East, hired in the mid-1920s – including Ben Hecht, William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald – who had some productive success. An oft-cited telegram repeated with zeal by writers and historians comes from Herman Mankiewicz to Ben Hecht and reads:

> Will you accept 300 per week to work for Paramount Pictures. All expenses paid. The 300 is peanuts. Millions are to be grabbed out here and your only competition is idiots. Don't let this get around.
>
> (quoted in Stempel 1988: 64)

Here, the maverick screenwriter reappears and histories of the profession are fuelled by a cheeky and unruly set of voices. Theses voices are, by this stage, also overwhelmingly masculine, which has a direct, gendered impact on the kinds of professional stories that are retold both in and outside the histories. Francke (1994: 18) notes that popular female writers were also being hired at this time, often from other literary genres such as romance or detective story novelists (Elinor Glyn for example, who was transplanted from the UK in the 1920s) to write for perceived 'women's films', particularly melodramas. These names and genres are often overshadowed or ignored entirely within histories that privilege the Fitzgeralds and Faulkners. Harper (2000: 173) writes that American production companies in the 1930s also gave 'substantial employment to British women screenwriters but only for one-picture contracts: Evadne Price

at Paramount, Billie Bristow at United Artists, Margaret McDonnell at RKO, Alison Booth at Fox British, Elizabeth Meehan at Warner Brothers'. Francke (1994: 22) goes on to note that these women were glamourized in the industry press but also framed as outside the myth of the 'maverick' artist, an inherently masculine creative stereotype, much like those of the 'pioneer' or the 'rebel'. Holliday (1995: 328) notes that women screenwriters were regularly referred to as 'girls' or as 'boyish', were often framed in relation to domestic settings (surrounded by 'dainty' office furnishings for example), or were simply written off as secretaries or stenographers (descriptions of Joan Harrison and Bradley King, respectively, from their male contemporaries).

The 'unruly' tone of the time can be read as a reaction to the perceived degrading and deskilling processes already underway, and confidence and brashness appear within anecdotes about particular writers that mask the anxiety and insecurity of the time. The key to success as a contract writer in the 1920s seems to be learning the form and style of the medium and the genre, along with the inner workings of the industry, as quickly as possible. Mankiewicz also instructed Hecht on narrative and gendered rules:

> I want to point out to you … that in a novel a hero can lay ten girls and marry a virgin for a finish. In a movie this is not allowed. The hero, as well as the heroine, has to be a virgin. The villain can lay anybody he wants, have as much fun as he wants cheating and stealing, getting rich and whipping the servants. But you have to shoot him in the end.
>
> (quoted in Norman 2007: 90)

There is evidence here of more sophisticated processes of occupational differentiation at this time. So, these stories illustrate the need to shed literary habits and adjust to the dictates of the screenwriting 'craft' and historians note that many of these authors had difficulty with the shift in style; some had trouble understanding the tone of speech needed for screen dialogue for example (Stempel 1988: 63) but many quickly adapted in order to reap the large financial rewards available.[6] Ben Hecht described it thus (note again, the masculine pronouns):

> The writer intent on 'doing his best' has to expose that best to critical blasts that mow him down, two times out of three. And if he wants to keep serving his art, he and his lacerations must lead a sort of a hall-bedroom existence … The movies solved such matters. There were no critics to mow him down. The writer of a film is practically anonymous. It's a pleasant anonymity.
>
> (cited in Schultheiss 1971: 20)

Maras (2009) argues that this period marks a key historical moment that solidified the developing discourses around the distinctiveness of screenwriting in comparison to other creative forms. For Stempel, it was this early wave of writers that fuelled the myth of Hollywood as the 'destroyer of literary talent'

along with the consequent view that screenwriting was a polluting force for writers in other mediums. This historical project is populated, by this point, with an *explicit* set of rhetorical devices – particular themes, particular figures (usually men), particular moments in time – that promote the increasing intelligibility and standardization of screenwriting work as it develops as a new form of creative labor and a form of industrial writing. What is *implicit* in these histories, but no less intelligible, are a number of other structuring devices – the increasingly gendered, misogynistic and exclusionary nature of the profession and an increasing hierarchization and stratification of the labor market – devices that are solidified within Hollywood's studio system.

The studio era and the degradation of screenwriting work

The studio system, developing and rapidly consolidating in the 1930s and 1940s, represents the rise of centralized corporate control of industrial screen production. Whilst it has seen a number of iterations in subsequent decades, the studios have continued to dictate the organization of mainstream filmmaking inside and outside Hollywood. At this point, screenwriting histories converge on a number of powerful figures (the studios and their bosses) and a number of now-familiar and enduring images. Hortense Powdermaker's classic study of Hollywood's production ecology in the 1940s offers a fascinating account of this, in which she dedicates significant space to the discussion of 'The Scribes' (1950: 131–49). She assigns each scribe a name, names that, when strung together, highlight a number of subject positions for industrial screenwriters of the time: Mr Hopeful, Miss Sanguine, Mr Pretentious, Mr Modest, Mr Cynic, Mr Acquiesce, Mr Coincidence, Mr Literary, Mr Gifted. To this list of scribes, we could add a number of other more general and loaded terms that circulate through Hollywood histories and descriptions of screenwriters during the studio era: hired hands, liars, schmucks. Each studio had complete control over their labor force – directors, writers, stars and technical crew – and pioneered various ways to maintain control. Each studio also pioneered particular styles that connect to the documented experiences of the writers and directors who worked within them. As Harper (2000: 168) notes, this was similar to British studios that had developed different scripting processes and styles. It was often the male studio heads that instituted the various regimes of control within the studios and serve as the necessary antagonists in the historical narrative. Notably, as Mahar so deftly illustrates, the rise of the studio system also meant increasing and overt hostility towards female screenwriters and filmmakers and the rise of 'the community's fraternalist associational life' (2001: 105).

At MGM, Louis B. Mayer, and subsequently Irving Thalberg, had a lasting effect on the position of screenwriters. Thalberg both respected and charmed his writers according to Stempel but also pioneered more extreme divisions of labor. He developed the routine practice (which filtered outwards to other studios) of hiring more than one writer or teams of writers to write the same script, often without the others knowing it (Stempel 1988: 71).[7] Thalberg and

his producers would then shuffle various scenes from the many scripts into a shooting script and, after the film was shot, it would often be further reworked or rewritten after preview screenings. Another strategy to maximize output was to assign 'several screenwriters on several ideas per star at the same time, knowing some of the scripts would work, some wouldn't' (Norman 2007: 15). Because films were strictly star-centred in the era, this was a strategy to have star vehicles lined up so that actors were shifted from project to project with no costly development time in between. Again, 'more scripts were assigned than films budgeted' (ibid.) leading to a large amount of redundant script material that would never be used but allowed a highly efficient production system overall. However, this process clearly affected the view the writers had of their vocation, as William de Mille (writing in 1939) explains:

> The writer naturally lost his [sic] sense of artistic responsibility. Constantly rewriting the work of others and knowing that his own work, in turn, would be changed and changed again, he simply did the best he could and took comfort in his salary.
>
> (quoted in Schultheiss 1971: 26)

Notably, the writers who were given credit on particular studio films were often those who simply worked on it last and had polished the shooting script or rewritten sections of dialogue. Writer Donald Ogden Stewart describes this situation and its consequences:

> The first thing you had to learn as a writer if you wanted to get screen credit was to hold off until you knew they were going to start shooting … If you could possibly screw-up another writer's script, it wasn't beyond you to do that so your script would come through at the end. It became a game to be the last one before they started shooting.
>
> (quoted in Norman 2007: 142)

For the writers working in this milieu, the system as it developed was deeply problematic, especially as credits became more central to the reputations of individual writers. Stempel notes that it was at MGM that the first stirrings of what became the Writers Guild were felt (1988: 72). And because of Thalberg's management style, the films themselves are often viewed as episodic and disjointed, a probable consequence of the process of cobbling numerous scripts together in order to extract the final product. In contrast, Twentieth Century Fox was viewed as 'the studio of the writer', a view associated with its head of production for 21 years, Daryl F. Zanuck. His position was that stories were more important than stars and he focused precisely on the narrative line and fluidity of the films he produced. Respected male writers such as Philip Dunne and Nunnally Johnson worked at Fox for many years and worked collaboratively with Zanuck. Zanuck often had writers working serially but not simultaneously on Fox films (Stempel 1988: 78–79).

Despite the emergence of more collaborative and nurturing accounts of collaboration at the time, a derisive and suspicious view of screenwriters prevails amongst tales of studio bosses. The head of Warner Brothers, Jack Warner, referred to writers as 'schmucks with Underwoods' (ibid: 85) and is rumored to have sneaked to the writers' rooms on his studio lot to see if the writers were typing.[8] Another much repeated anecdote of the time has the head of Columbia, Harry Cohn, listening to the clacking of typewriter keys from his writers and screaming 'Liars!' Jack Warner had strict rules about his writers' conduct:

> A writer was not permitted on the set without written permission from Jack Warner … A writer was never invited to see his [sic] rushes. He was never invited to a preview. If he wanted to see his own picture on the screen, he paid his money and went and saw them.
>
> (quoted in Norman 2007: 136)

As the studio heads hired more producers to oversee the expanding production slates, they too utilized extreme divisions of labor as Norman illustrates. For example, Harold Hurley, a Paramount producer, assigned different characters within a single story to different writers (ibid.: 139). Like the gag room system of Mack Sennett, Norman notes that 'the oral tradition' was still key to the development process (because many of the studio heads refused to read the scripts themselves) and so writers were often subjected to conferences in which they were forced to defend their decisions or agree to endless rewrites (ibid.: 140). Schultheiss quotes Raymond Chandler who vividly describes how the studio system debilitated 'the author's efforts of creation' (note again the masculine pronouns):

> It makes very little difference how a writer feels towards his producer as a man; the fact that the producers can change and destroy and disregard his work can only operate to diminish that work in its conception and to make it mechanical and indifferent in execution … That which is born in loneliness and from the heart cannot be defended against the judgement of a committee of sycophants … There is little magic or emotion or situation which can remain alive after the incessant bonescraping revisions imposed on the Hollywood writer by the process of rule by decree.
>
> (Schultheiss 1971: 25)

Stempel notes that there were some independent male writers of the time who were not tied to a single studio, such as Ben Hecht and Dudley Nichols who worked with high-profile directors (Alfred Hitchcock and John Ford for example), but generally:

> Screenwriters were more and more limited to being involved in merely the first step in the creation of films. They would develop the ideas and have

> an overall concept for the film but they had very little control over the final film.
>
> (Stempel 1988: 123)

To remedy this, many histories highlight the ways in which writers wrested some creative control *within* the system. Some worked to become writer/directors and individuals such as Preston Sturges were able to exercise unprecedented creative control.[9] From the point of view of the studio heads, the way to reward individual writers was to periodically offer them producing roles that would mitigate against the demand to improve working conditions for all screenwriters. With the direct control of the Hays Code in the 1930s, writers also exercised illicit freedoms within the system by creating euphemisms for 'unacceptable' content[10] and Norman writes: 'sneaking clever, minor things past the Hays Office became an indoor sport' (2007: 145). Writing teams also developed as a strategic remedy to counter insecurity and as Francke (1994: 66) notes, in the 1940s and 1950s, women screenwriters were regularly part of teams or writing partnerships in an industry that was otherwise now highly gendered and discriminatory. The masculinization of the profession is further illustrated by the fact that so many of the histories of screenwriting that discuss women screenwriters refer to their romantic relationships with male writers and filmmakers, whether via marriage (Alma Reville who co-wrote many of Hitchcock's films for example) or vaguer reference to rumours of 'hanky panky' (Catherine Turney's mentorship from producer Hanry Blanke as discussed by Francke 1994: 49).[11] Very few of the early female scenarists were still working in the US studio era and the vast majority of the contracted studio writers were white men. In the UK, Harper notes that the post-war period saw more women or 'career screenwriters' in 'sole command of a scripting project' (2000: 177). Women worked on around 150 British film scripts in the 1940s and this figure then drops to 80 in the 1950s, although the 1950s also saw certain women, such as Muriel Box (who also directed) working on higher profile projects (ibid.: 181). Women were periodically hired to write within certain genres designated as 'women's' genres but the perceived egalitarianism of the silent period had largely receded by this time.

Anecdotes about writing around the Hays Code signal a deeper underlying strategy according to these histories – writers calculating and navigating within this mode of authorship to protect the core elements of their narratives. Donald Ogden Stewart describes the strategizing of the time: 'I used always to write three or four scenes which I knew would be thrown out, in order that we could bargain with Joe Breen for the retention of other really important episodes or speeches' (quoted in Norman 2007: 145). Increasingly, unionization also became a viable option for writers to gain and maintain some creative control over their writing and, outside the Hollywood production system, the Communist Party attracted large numbers of screenwriters and other industry professionals. At this juncture, a collective, politicized, explicitly laborist identity for the industrial screenwriter within Hollywood grows. Subsequent privileged moments in the histories serve to solidify this identity.[12]

This collection of scenes and players from the early part of Hollywood's historical record set up a number of rhetorical devices that animate the persona of the screenwriter and the language used to construct her/his work. These are also devices that resonate in the domain(s) of contemporary screenwriting work; screenwriting as potentially flexible but also as degraded and deskilled; screenwriting as standardized and craft oriented, in contrast to other forms of writing; screenwriting as lucrative but also compromised and thus impure; as commercially but not artistically legitimate. These all conjure up an anxious, tortured and gendered screenwriter-as-myth and this is important in that these devices make this form of work normative and intelligible to producers, audiences and writers themselves. A sense of collectivity is also fostered in this early phase, a sense of shared purpose in terms of the writing itself and its standards, which are taught both formally, in how-to manuals, and informally, through anecdotes and stories; a communal history involving key players from the worlds of scenario writing, theatre and other forms of authorship; and a common set of antagonists: studio bosses, producers and critics.

This historical project serves as a conduit for the increased intelligibility of screenwriting as a form of creative labor, and this project *also* fosters increased exclusion and hierarchization. Various modalities of the work come into focus – writer-for-hire, script doctor, elite literary export, prominent writer-director, genre writer, writing team. It is upon these early rhetorical foundations that the contemporary persona of the industrial screenwriter and the contemporary modes of screenwriting work are rooted. It is also within these foundations that particular forms of currency for screenwriters are established, led by standard forms of exchange such as the awarding of credits (see also Price 2010). There are also more intangible but no less potent forms of currency that writers begin to trade and exchange. For example, the collection and retelling of horror stories, whether in relation to a Mack Sennett or an Irving Thalberg or a contemporary studio executive, become a strategy to gain and maintain professional capital that can be used to leverage respect, status and confidence within the screen production community (see Chapters 3 and 4).

The second half of this chapter now shifts into the contemporary period, a period that has been characterized as post-Fordist and flexibly specialized (for more, see Chapter 2) but one in which continuities are as palpable as changes in terms of production organization and experiences of the work. This means that other key moments in the historical record will not be subject to detailed discussion – the HUAC Blacklist of the 1950s,[13] for example, or the rise of the Hollywood 'Brat Pack'[14] in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, this first section illustrates how the industrial screenwriting that developed within Hollywood became intelligible as a form of authorship, as a new storytelling method and as a new form of creative work. This first section has also illustrated the less prominent but more potent ways in which the profession becomes normative and historically coherent: via hierarchization, marginalization and gender exclusion. These themes are now traced across and into the contemporary labor relations of the screenwriting profession. The Hollywood and British

screenwriting labor markets will be distinguished but this second section will also demonstrate how they are enmeshed and connected via industrial dynamics and the conflicting myths of the profession outlined above.

The development of contemporary labor relations in Hollywood

More recent developments in labor relations within Hollywood are the starting point for this next section. Here, the changing dynamics of screenwriting as work and as myth will be connected to the unionization of mainstream screenwriters in the USA and UK as well as the increasing hierarchization of these labor markets. For example, an 'above'- and 'below'-the-line distinction developed that now echoes a more pronounced creativity versus craft dichotomy, separating out labor market sectors and kinds of screenwriting work. Forms of worker currency such as the collection of credits and residuals payments, used as tools for reputation building, are more firmly entrenched. And across these patterns of continuity and change, the conflicted, exclusionary screenwriter-as-myth remains at the center of these developments, coordinating, linking and hierarchizing writers and their work from Hollywood to London. Scott (2005) argues that the history of the Hollywood labor market can be divided into two episodes, as the general history of the Hollywood production system often is: the classical studio era discussed above, and the 'new Hollywood' era in the second half of the twentieth century. Scott (and other theorists such as Christopherson and Storper 1986, 1989 and Ross 1941) notes that, within the classical studio system, workers were hired under contract to particular studios, laboring as permanent employees for regular wages. This status applied to all workers from stars to writers to manual workers and technicians. However, the developments in early union movements do offer varying experiences for so-called 'craft' workers as opposed to 'talent' or creative workers.

The unionization of creative workers here is somewhat peculiar. As Chapter 2 will more fully outline, creative labor theory is largely premised on the assumption that creative work is non-unionized, and (therefore) is post-Fordist, flexible and freelance and always has been. This is not the case for screenwriters and many of their collaborators. Early attempts at unionization on the part of 'creative' (or 'talent') film workers in Hollywood were harder fought than organization and collective bargaining for semi-skilled 'craft' workers, but these two tiers are now represented by separate labor organizations: talent guilds such as the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), Directors Guild of America (DGA) and the Writers Guild of America (WGA) and craft unions such as the Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE).[15] Generally, the unions and guilds now bargain with the AMPTP (Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers), which represents the studios under the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America), and contracts are negotiated separately for each union or guild in three-year cycles. The Writers Guild(s) of America (East and West branches) have played a central role in the ongoing collective orientation of screenwriters based in the USA and beyond and have been the collective

mouthpiece for screenwriters' working interests since its inception in the 1930s. Membership and thus influence has only increased: from the 1970s to the mid-1980s the Writers Guild of America (WGA) grew from a membership of 800 to 6,000 and membership continued to grow by 7 percent per year into the late 1980s (Christopherson 1996: 105).[16]

For Scott, the second episode in the history of Hollywood production from the 1950s onwards saw a profound shift to the externalization of the employment relation:

> In this new order of things, perhaps the majority of workers now assumed temporary or freelance status, being taken on by production companies as limited-term employees or operating on a commission basis, and moving irregularly from job to job depending on the fluctuations of productive activity.
>
> (Scott 2005: 117)

Generally, changes in production organization led to concomitant changes in industrial organization, changes that profoundly altered the culture(s) of screen production work. As the studio system broke down in the 'new Hollywood' era, a craft/creative division firmly cast writers (along with directors and actors) as 'creative/above-the-line' and condemned other forms of filmmaking from set construction, art direction and lighting design to 'craft/below-the-line'. This 'line', separating these new external occupational categories, is a crude but now well-established division that is part of most film budgets in all mainstream screen production industries (see Miller *et al*. 2005). For Christopherson, hierarchies developed that soon transcended the talent versus craft divide. As she puts it:

> The historical social division of labor between craft and talent, manager and worker, was undermined and new divisions, such as those between entrepreneur-property holders and wage workers, were constructed. This transformation created new tensions between individual skills and collective identities.
>
> (Christopherson 1996: 108)

Scott (2005: 127) writes that the Hollywood labor market is now characterized by an intricate system of occupational categories now codified within collective bargaining agreements. These categories illustrate the myriad divisions of labor both above- and below-the-line and link directly to rates of pay, credits awarded to various roles undertaken on particular films, and prestige and status within the industry. This creative labor system is characterized by a pyramid structure that is chronically bloated at the base because, as Scott illustrates, there is a constant over-supply of aspirants who are then slowly filtered through the system along various paths, either into routine 'day jobs' such as television writing, out of the industry altogether or up into the higher echelons, where

reputation, credits, asking prices and interpersonal networks all play significant roles in maintaining one's status (Scott 2005: 128). The importance of residuals payments (minimum payments for the presentation and re-presentation of one's work) as a form of currency, alongside longer term currencies such as credits, become central here. These minimum payments, negotiated and regulated by the talent guilds, enable the appropriation of creative rents for individual, unionized screenwriters but they further stratify screenwriters within this increasingly complex field.[17]

On the one hand then, the histories of screenwriting, as they feed into the organization of contemporary labor markets, serve to *unify* screenwriters. They emphasize collective myths and a common set of origin stories as well as the particularism of collective organization and bargaining. Today's industrial screenwriting milieu can thus be characterized as 'speaking back' to a collective and unruly history – calling up those figures, events and conditions in their own navigations and calculations. Contemporary screenwriters working in the UK, Europe and Hollywood and often across all of these spaces simultaneously, regularly refer to the 'hired hand' nature of their profession and its origins, or refer to writing techniques that mirror those of their forbears such as 'following' or strategizing to protect core elements of their scripts (for more on these strategies, see Chapter 3).

On the other hand, the complex historical and contemporary labor relations of this profession only compound the fractures and exclusions that have also always been present although not always as visible. These are divisions that stratify workers according to rates of pay, social position, gender, genre and medium, and often all of the above. These new divisions continue to proliferate as screenwriters are increasingly trying to 'speak ahead'; that is, to engage with and adapt to the possible direction(s) of their work at a time in which the future of the screen production industries is often characterized as opaque or illegible. The advent of new technologies for the production and distribution of film and television has raised a number of urgent questions about new models of remuneration for screenwriting work that can proliferate across a range of media and increasingly in online platforms.[18] And the continued, deeply entrenched inequalities within screenwriting labor markets undercut any collective myths that lionize the pioneering writers of the past or hail the maverick writer-directors of the future. So, taking all of these historical and contradictory dynamics into account, the final sections of this chapter now ask: what are the key characteristics and hierarchies of the work in Hollywood and London?

Hollywood screenwriters by numbers

The internal logics of the Hollywood-centric screenwriting labor market mean that there are now a number of distinct modalities of screenwriting work within Hollywood, some of which mirror the earliest forms of the work. There is a feature film speculative ('spec') script market in which unsolicited scripts are written, circulated, assessed, hyped and, sometimes, produced. The feature

film writing market is often broken down into a number of positions. Experienced writers at the top of Scott's (2005) occupational pyramid are commissioned to write multiple drafts from previously acquired material or from their own 'spec' scripts, with the possibility for their own redrafts and revisions. However, inexperienced writers often lack the currency or reputation to see a project through from draft to draft. More likely, they will be forced to sign 'step agreements' that grant the producers on a particular project the chance to drop a writer, or hire new writer(s) at any point in the writing process if 'satisfactory' progress is not made. These practices are not unlike those of simultaneous or serial screenwriting developed in the studio era; writers continue to be isolated and hierarchized depending on their industrial position and past success is no guarantee of continued or future success and recognition.

Levels of remuneration for Hollywood-based writers also vary considerably between the minimum wages set by the Writers Guilds for writing a treatment or first draft and the very high retainers that are paid to the few 'sought-after' screenwriters at any particular point in time. Within the 2011 Writers Guild of America West 'Schedule of Minimums', the delivery of an original screenplay including treatment[19] ranged from US$63,895 to US$119,954. Figures for the top end of the pay spectrum are more difficult to accurately document but 'top spec sales' in a given year are often reported via the Hollywood industry press (such as *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety*) and websites such as 'The Blacklist 3.0' (see The Black List 2013). Often, these reports are somewhat veiled, so script sales are reported in 'the high six figures' or 'mid-six against high-six figures' (see Myers 2012). A number of economic factors are influential here including the commercial sensitivity of these top-end figures for production companies and studios as well as for established writers. But also, and even more slippery, the notorious Hollywood rumour mill thrives on such speculative figures and serves to inflate hype and prestige around particular projects and writers during the development process. This further veils the material conditions of the pay negotiations that are conducted within the industry, fuelling confusion both within and outside screenwriting labor networks about what screenwriting work is 'really worth' and perpetuating such obfuscatory industrial axioms as 'nobody knows anything' (Goldman 1983).[20]

Television writing offers another distinct modality in Hollywood – a model of contract-based and network-centered writing dominated by the writer's room and the show-runner. The term 'writer's room' refers to the office space in which writers work communally on particular television programs, usually led by a 'show-runner', the executive writer-producer and 'creative director' of long-running television series. The show-runner offers a model of a more empowered writer-producer who exerts creative control in the screenwriting labor market and strong (usually, although not exclusively, male) personalities such as David Chase (creator of *The Sopranos*, 1999–2007), David Simon (creator of *The Wire*, 2002–8) and Matthew Weiner (creator of *Mad Men*, 2007–) are now oft-cited. Here, screenwriting is shaped by the dictates of the television program in question and the writing itself is undertaken committee

style, in piecemeal forms (contracted writers are assigned to write particular episodes and scenes overseen by the show-runner) and with an underlying sense of seasonal stability.

There are other structural features of the Hollywood screenwriting labor market that now signal entrenched or increasing instability, precariousness and hierarchization. For example, *declining* union membership in recent years illustrates the increased willingness on the part of the large production companies and studios to seek out and hire non-unionized production workers to avoid paying minimum wages, residuals and benefits (recall the striking writer Bryan Cooke quoted in the introduction). This illustrates a reduction in the collective heft of the screenwriting labor force, a heft that has sheltered writers both past and present from many of the vagaries and insecurities of the industry. The 2009 *Writers Report* from the Writers Guild of America West (WGAW) for example, notes that membership was at 8,131, down from 8,275 in 2007, representing a longer term decline in membership figures (Writers Guild of America West 2009: 13).

This WGAW report also emphasizes the lack of change in the diversity of Hollywood-based screenwriters in the years 2003–7. So, white male writers' median earnings increased 18.4 percent between 2001–7 from US$95,000 to US $121,500 and 'Women remain stuck at 28 percent of television employment and 18 percent in film employment and the earnings gap in film actually grew' (Writers Guild of America West 2009: 14). The WGAW reported that minority writers also 'remained stuck' at 6 percent of film sector employment from 1999 to 2008. The lack of diversity within the Hollywood screenwriting labor market continues to blight any mythic or real-world sense of industrial egalitarianism or collectivism as well as underscoring the *continued* gendered and exclusionary dynamics of this creative profession. Rather than 'nobody knows anything', it is quite clear that, as Christopherson more recently writes, the Hollywood screenwriting industry is increasingly bifurcated, deprofessionalized and deeply exclusionary (2008: 85).

British screenwriters by numbers

In the UK screenwriting labor market the variety of possible working modalities also circulate but vary because of the particular structural and cultural determinants of the industry. The British industry is often referred to as a cottage industry (as most other national film industries are) and one that is elite, US-dominated in terms of production, distribution and exhibition, small-scale and structurally fractured. For example, it is London-centric,[21] the workforce is well educated and is overwhelmingly dominated by older, white men (British Film Institute 2012). As Caldwell (2008: 33) puts it, the British industry is small, volatile, unpredictable and lacking in resilience.[22] The British Film Institute reports that in 2011, 39,011 worked in the film production sector in the UK; 60 percent of those designated as 'self-employed' (British Film Institute 2012: 199–200).[23] Creative Skillset's[24] last employment census, in 2009, recorded 3,300

people working in 'creative development', which encompasses scripting, storyboarding, writing and producing for broadcast and independent television, film and online content (Skillset 2009), and taking into account the Writer's Guild of Great Britain's (WGGB) membership figures (see below) estimates of the number of self-described screenwriters currently working in the UK are usually in the area of between 1,200 and 1,300 (see also MacDonald 2004a).

In terms of collective organization in the UK, the picture is more diffuse, reflecting the industrial setting as a whole. Figures held by the National Trades Union Congress (Trades Union Congress 2013: 35) indicate that BECTU (the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union, which has divisions for BBC employees, for arts and entertainment and for independent broadcasting and also has a script registration service) had a total membership figure of 24,326 in 2013. The Writers Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) had 1,068 members in the same year (Trades Union Congress 2013: 35) and has negotiated numerous agreements and guidelines for British writers, including the screenwriting credits agreements (first negotiated in the 1970s),[25] the BBC Television Script Agreement and minimum payment schedules for the BBC and other broadcasters such as ITV. The WGGB's schedule of minimums with PACT dates back to 1992 at which time the minimum total payment for films budgeted at £2 million or over was £31,320. This includes the writing of a treatment, a first draft and a second draft and these figures have since been revised upwards (see Writers Guild of Great Britain 2013).

BBC minimum pay rates have been renegotiated much more regularly, indicating the relative consistency and stability of this mode of screenwriting in the UK. The most recent minimum figures are £10,800 for a 60-minute teleplay, £9,840 per 60 minutes for a series/serial and £4,320 per 60 minutes for an adaptation (Writers Guild of Great Britain 2013). When it comes to unionization however, it is clear that the British and Hollywood industries are utterly enmeshed. The UK Film Council (2007) noted that many British writers are WGA West or East members, many more than the WGGB, which has a more marginal status in the UK film industry. This report also noted that many writers of British-made films were *only* contactable in the course of the research via a Hollywood-based agent. These industries are also enmeshed with respect to patterns of exclusion. For example in 2011, 18 percent of British films were written by women (British Film Institute 2012), an identical figure to the WGAW's figures on women's employment in Hollywood. Since the British Film Institute began monitoring the proportion of women writing British films (in 2007), this figure has never risen above 20 percent.[26]

These disparate figures offer a fragmented understanding of the real-world dynamics of the UK's screenwriting labor market, a market in which many writers juggle roles, shift from project to project in different mediums and may operate at different points in their careers as both permanent employees and 'flexible' freelancers. British screenwriters move more fluidly between film and television production than in Hollywood largely because the industry is much smaller and the small pool of production money dictates it. Arguably, British

writers, especially television writers, can and do garner significant name recognition and respect over time as their American show-runner counterparts do.[27] Contemporary writers such as Julian Fellowes (*Gosford Park* 2001, *Downton Abbey* 2010–), Armando Iannucci (*The Thick of It* 2005–12, *Veep* 2012–) and Abi Morgan (*The Iron Lady* 2011, *The Hour* 2011–12) are recognizable 'name' writers and have robust trans-Atlantic careers but also have 'horror stories' of their own to share, an echo of the tales of woe from much earlier name writers in this chapter.[28]

According to MacDonald, modalities of screenwriting within the UK context are largely genre bound and this is reflected in remuneration and collective bargaining strategies in the UK. This also follows considering the dominance of British screen production by American finance and inherited ideas from Hollywood about screen storytelling conventions:

> The popularity (and potential for dramatic storylines) of genre TV series, in particular medical and police dramas, have created a major market for screenwriters. Screenwriters therefore have to work within clearly defined forms of moving image drama, based around four broad categories: single drama/feature, serial/mini-series, open-ended serial/soap and series/'discontinuous soap'. This demands an awareness of (or of working within) popular genres.
>
> (MacDonald 2004a: 168)

As Chapter 3 will show, British screenwriters routinely pursue writing on multiple platforms – theatre, film, television, radio and online content – not unlike the multivalent, flexible scenarists of the earliest days of Hollywood. They supplement their income by undertaking other forms of related work such as teaching screenwriting, script editing, running training seminars and workshops and writing how-to manuals. British-based writers also align with and emulate the myths of the screenwriter (as hired hands, as marginal, as combative and so on) in discussions of their work and the calculations and navigations that characterize their careers. Because they, too, are operating in an industry dominated by Hollywood funding, Hollywood-oriented standards of structure, character and conflict within screen storytelling (which percolate through how-to manuals), and Hollywoodized genre categories, British writers are conditioned to a similar set of devices of intelligibility and speak with and through these: screenwriting is potentially flexible but is also degraded and deskilled; screenwriting is standardized and craft oriented (in contrast to other forms of writing); screenwriting is lucrative but is also compromised and thus impure; screenwriting is commercial and thus not necessarily striving for artistic legitimacy.

Conclusion

Recent developments in the UK, Europe and the USA highlight a renewed desire for collectivism across these screenwriting labor markets. Prior to the

prominent US Writers' Strike in 2007–8, the first 'World Conference of Screenwriters' was held in Athens in 2006 that bought together representatives from a number of the European and North American writers' guilds to discuss labor market issues affecting screenwriting. This followed from the release of a 'manifesto' from the Federation of Screenwriters of Europe (made up of 28 European writers' guilds) that advocated for the 'moral rights' of screenwriters. Within the manifesto, statements were made that signal an attempt to claw back some of the ground lost by the marginalization of screenwriters as authorial figures[29] over time:

> The screenwriter is an author of the film, the primary creator of the audiovisual work

and

> The indiscriminate use of the possessory credit is unacceptable.
> (Federation of Screenwriters of Europe 2006).

The manifesto also calls for fair payment and the right for the screenwriter to be involved in the entire production process, a form of creative legitimacy that screenwriters have struggled to maintain since those earliest days of the 'scenario writer' in Hollywood. The organization calls for more focus on the screenwriter in these capacities through funding and the recognition of their work at film festivals for example. In response to these events, McNab described a new and 'powerful' sense of collective identity within the European screenwriting industry although the manifesto was characterized as more symbolic than material (the conclusion of this volume will return to this manifesto). The producer Kevin Loader was quoted in response with an invocation of economic realities, a call-back to the villainous producers and studio heads of the 1940s and 1950s: 'I wouldn't get the money to make my film if I wasn't prepared to persuade my writers to sign their moral rights away' (McNab 2009).

The early histories of screenwriting that opened this chapter rely, at least in part, on unreliable and polemical accounts of the profession. They are based on rhetorical devices, villains and heroes and whimsical anecdotes as much as facts and figures. But these accounts represent a coherent set of concerns about the creative legitimacy of this profession, the distinctiveness of the labor, and the pleasures and pains of the screenwriting industry and they do important work. As Caldwell (2008: 47) puts it, these kinds of genesis myths allow producers across time and space to 'muse on moments of seeming inevitability in which the industry is finally forced to recognize the centrality and broad significance of their given specialization'. And at the centre of these accounts is a mythic figure of the screenwriter, one that is contested but defined by a number of well-worn traits and images: maverick, pioneer, unappreciated genius, buoyed by intermittent success and name recognition but also resigned to marginalization or invisibility. As the industry continues to demonstrate old and new

forms of hierarchization, insecurity and exclusion, the intelligibility and collectivism of screenwriting work has been both reinforced and undermined. These patterns of continuity and change have material and differential consequences for the daily lives of screenwriters from Hollywood to London and all those who flow between these industries. The next chapter will discuss how the particular dynamics of the screenwriting profession can be understood via theories of creative labor and the analysis of screenwriting as authorship, as a marginal and particular form of creative writing and screen production. Chapter 3 will then further analyze the ways in which these professional histories and myths percolate through the daily working lives of screenwriters.

Notes

1 For example the Backstory series, edited by Patrick McGilligan, offers a large collection of interviews with writers from each decade, which bolsters the historical record with personal perspectives and insights from Hollywood-based writers in the 'Golden Age' (*Backstory 1* 1986), in the 1940s and 1950s (*Backstory 2* 1991), the 1960s (*Backstory 3* 1997), the 1970s and 1980s (*Backstory 4* 2006) and the 1990s (*Backstory 5* 2010).
2 A parallel can be drawn here between this era and its defining features for scenario writers, and more recent accounts of creative workers within the 'new cultural economy' in which flexibility and multivalency are, once again, buzzwords for fulfilling and autonomous forms of work. See Chapter 2 and Conor (2013).
3 Crucially, the overall mythologization of the professional screenwriter is highly gendered; note in the discussion that follows that masculine pronouns are routinely used in historical discussions of screenwriters (see Chapter 5 for a full analysis).
4 Holliday also offers fascinating evidence, drawn from the script files of the Thomas Ince collection, of the 'toning down' of some of King's scenarios in the 1920s, scenarios initially offering explicit feminist messages and themes that were 'muted' in subsequent drafts, finally ending up with working titles such as 'What a wife learned' (1995: 287–88). For more on gender and screenwriting, see Chapter 5.
5 For more on auteur theory, see Chapter 2.
6 Schultheiss uses Mankiewicz's example to illustrate the large pay packets that attracted this second wave of writers. He cites Pauline Kael who notes his base salary was US$40,800 his first year and US$56,000 by his second. This is in contrast to the livings that the writers eked out writing novels and/or plays. Nathanael West described grossing US$780 in the course of three years and two published books (Schultheiss 1971: 21).
7 Norman notes that this practice was called 'following' within the business (2007: 135).
8 An 'underwood' was the ubiquitous brand of typewriter used at the time.
9 Sturges negotiated an individual contract at Paramount in the 1930s. His speculative script *The Power and the Glory* (1933) was sold to producer Jesse Lasky and, within the deal signed, the film would be shot as written and Sturges had complete creative control. He was also paid a percentage of the gross as opposed to a flat fee that set an important precedent (Stempel 1988: 95).
10 The Hays Code was explicit about 'plot material' that was unacceptable for moral reasons at this time. Material considered unacceptable included adultery, 'scenes of passion', murder, vulgarity and 'suggestive dancing' (Norman 2007: 143–44).
11 Sue Harper (2000) also provides an interesting account of British women screenwriters and writing partnerships in the 1930s and 1940s.

12 Such as the formation of the Writers Guild and the HUAC Hollywood Blacklist of the 1950s.
13 HUAC – the House UnAmerican Affairs Committee, saw the interrogation and prosecution of a number of Hollywood-based writers for Communist and 'Un-American' activities in the 1950s and is employed in historical accounts to illustrate the political machinations of 1950s American society. See both Stempel (1988) and Norman (2007) for useful discussion of this.
14 Films such as *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *Easy Rider* (1969) or filmmakers such as Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, as well as European filmmakers like Francois Truffaut, are all cited as signaling a new 'transgressive' era in the 1960s and 1970s that enabled new forms of more wholly collaborative screen production outside the corporate control of the studios. A screenwriter/historian such as Norman makes it clear, however, that this era and its frequently employed labels such as 'freedom' and 'creative ferment' did not preclude screenwriters continuing to be sidelined and subordinated by directors' egos, fueled by the auteur theory that was also gaining traction in the USA at this time (see Chapter 2).
15 IATSE have local branches in the USA based on both type of craft and geographical area.
16 Although there is evidence that this trend is now reversing – see more on this below.
17 In 18 of 21 strikes by above-the-line guilds between 1952 and 1995, the issue of residuals was the major or at least a prominent issue (Paul and Kleingartner 1996: 172). This was also the case in the most recent writers' strike action in 2007–8, in particular, residuals for new media circulation of screenwriters' work (see Atkins 2008, *Los Angeles Times* 2008, and *New York Times* 2008).
18 Questions have also been raised about the sovereignty of the written script-as-blueprint in such a context (see for example Millard 2010).
19 The 'Schedule of Minimums' is broken up into yearly periods and these figures are for the period effective 5 February 2011 to 5 January 2012. See Writers Guild of America West (2011b).
20 This is what Caves (2000) calls the 'nobody knows anything' property of creative economics. For more on political economy analyses of screen production see Chapter 2.
21 Sixty-eight percent of all film companies were located in London and the South East of England in 2010 according to the British Film Institute (2011).
22 The British Film Institute estimated the total turnover of the UK film production industry in 2011 was £1,415 million and total film production activity in the UK was worth £1,272 million. Note also these figures then distinguish between 'inward investment' films (films produced and/or post-produced in the UK and funded largely by USA studios: 32 in 2011 worth a total of £1,012 million) and UK domestic features (200 were made in 2011, worth £200 million). See British Film Institute (2012: 156).
23 Using data gathered from the National Labor Force Survey.
24 Creative Skillset is a 'sector skills council' for the UK creative industries. These councils are employer-led organizations, sanctioned by government and offering research and initiatives focused on training and skills for particular employment sectors.
25 With the Film Production Association of Great Britain, what is now the Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television or PACT.
26 And these figures match the disparate statistics that have been gathered in other countries and regions. For a full discussion, see Chapter 5.
27 Russell T. Davies (*Doctor Who*, 2005–9) has been referred to as a British showrunner although this is a less prominent subject position in the UK context (see Cornea 2008).

28 For example, Iannucci has had recent success with *Veep* (2012–) in the USA but has also spoken about the difficulties of adapting *The Thick of It* (2005–12) in Hollywood: 'When we were doing the pilot of *The Thick of It* at ABC there were just scores of people working on it, all called vice-president this and that, and a lot of them were buffoons'. Needless to say, the pilot was not picked up. Iannucci quoted in Dougary (2012).

29 This certainly connects to the ubiquity of auteur theory in parts of Europe, particularly France. For more on auteur theory, seen Chapter 2.

2 Screenwriting as creative labor

Screenwriting as a creative practice emerged from a long and conflicted history of dramatic writing and writing for the screen. It has been defined by the overwhelming dominance of Hollywood-oriented modes of storytelling and by local industrial dynamics. First, this chapter will outline a theoretical and critical framework for understanding the term 'creative labor' as it can be applied to the screenwriting profession. Developments and changes in the organization of production outlined in Chapter 1, and the rise of supposedly new forms of work and working experiences in late capitalism, are analyzed using a number of paradigms that range from 'liberal-democratic' theories of the information society (following Banks 2007 and Brophy 2008) to post-Fordist readings of changes in production organization. Autonomist-Marxist perspectives have also been deployed to emphasize the hegemonic influence of 'immaterial labor' in post-Fordist economies and more critical sociological accounts have outlined the features of work in now 'fiercely neoliberal' societies (McRobbie 2002b: 518). Second, this chapter will examine how cultural studies, sociologies of work and political economy have been employed to understand the changing experiences of work in recent decades and particularly how the work of artists and 'creatives' is now constituted and experienced within the 'new cultural economy'. Notions of subjectivity and industrial reflexivity will be linked with the concepts of creative labor and the particularities of screenwriting as creative labor will be foregrounded. Theoretical paradigms for the analysis of screenwriting as a creative practice are the focus of the second part of this chapter, particularly theories of cinematic authorship drawn from film studies. Overall, this chapter asks: how can screenwriting be theorized and understood as a form of creative labor?

Theorizing creative labor – conflicting paradigms

As theories of cultural work have developed over the last two decades, the foregrounding of new roles, experiences and understandings of cultural production have become routine. Analyses of what is now termed the 'new cultural economy' draw from a range of traditions and space does not permit a full analysis of them all, but a sample would include studies of the

postmodernization of production and Autonomist-Marxist accounts of the rise of immaterial and informational labor, discussions of the rise of the cultural economy itself and the 'culturalization' thesis, or works of cultural geography that focus on the shifting geographic and economic relations of cultural production in an area such as Los Angeles.[1] As empirical data on particular forms of work within the new cultural economy has been gathered across a range of cities, regions, industries and sectors, *new*-ness is often emphasized – within critical accounts of the rise of patently new kinds of cultural work in new sectors like web design, new media or game development or within large studies of the new multiplicity of production roles and reflexivities in particular industries.[2] The sections below summarize the various ways in which creative labor has been theorized across a range of fields.

Creative labor and media production studies

Media production work has been theorized across the traditions of political economy, cultural studies and the sociology of cultural production in the UK, Europe and the USA under a variety of headings: Caldwell's (2008) critical production studies (see also Mayer, Banks and Caldwell 2009), Hartley's creative industry studies (2005), Du Gay and Pryke's cultural economy studies (2002), Havens, Lotz and Tinic's critical media industry studies (2009) and contemporary studies of creative labor and cultural work (see also Conor 2013).[3]

In her pioneering work, McRobbie highlights the vagaries of fashion design work as exemplary creative labor: low remuneration, extremely long working hours and 'volatile and unpredictable' work patterns (2002a: 109) as well as the 'intransigent' pleasures and personal satisfaction the work offers those who undertake it. She notes other recurring features such as enforced youthfulness and occupational diversification, which are features of many kinds of creative work, including screenwriting. As McRobbie notes, these working practices are characteristic of 'portfolio careers' (2002a: 111), which are collated by individuals in order to offset the insecurity and capriciousness that is now built into 'flexible' production systems such as film or television making. This then requires creative individuals to be intensely entrepreneurial and self-promotional, echoing the constant need to 'work on oneself' that writers such as Du Gay (1996) and Rose (1999) articulate.[4] Another key feature of new creative work for McRobbie is the uneven spread of rewards across laboring sectors, a theme echoed by Ursell (2000) and one visible within Hollywood's screenwriting labor force, as outlined in the previous chapter (and see Chapter 5). Overall, McRobbie is concerned with all these features as 'disciplinary techniques', arguing that the inherently exploitative and problematic aspects of these employment trends are easily elided by concepts such as pleasure in creative work.

Across studies of creative and media labor then, and as Gill and Pratt (2008: 14) state, 'a number of relatively stable features of this kind of work' have been identified. Gill and Pratt go on to offer a summary:

> A preponderance of temporary, intermittent and precarious jobs; long hours and bulimic patterns of working; the collapse or erasure of boundaries between work and play; poor pay; high levels of mobility; passionate attachment to the work and to the identity of the creative laborer … an attitudinal mindset that is a blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism; informal work environments and distinctive forms of sociality; and profound experiences of insecurity and anxiety about finding work, earning enough money and 'keeping up' in rapidly changing fields…
>
> (ibid.)

Attendant debates within creative labor literature have regularly focused on whether these features of the work represent new freedoms for individuals at work – new pleasures, new flexible and porous schedules, new forms of 'good' work – and/or new and deeper forms of exploitation and self-exploitation in creative industries – pain, anxiety, new forms of 'bad' work from which there is no longer any way to 'clock out'. And empirical investigations of particular industries or kinds of creative labor have fuelled these debates, providing evidence of the ways in which creative subjects understand and make sense of their working experiences and daily lives. New-ness and difference are now undeniably central to our understanding of how culture is made in particular industries but particular production roles, particular creative and craft professions, are historically and temporally embedded and are circumscribed and understood via histories of practice. As Chapter 1 illustrated, screenwriting labor needs to be understood by considering both the historical dynamics of the profession and the ways in which those dynamics have changed over time and within different industries.

The importance of political economy

Political economy analyses are also useful here, both for contextualizing processes of continuity and industrial change and for particularizing the dynamics of creative professions, especially those such as screenwriting, which has, from its earliest days, been circumscribed via capitalist relations of cultural production. Ryan (1991: 117), for example, argues that the degradation of creativity, as the histories and myths of the screenwriting profession foreground, is inherent to the industrial production of artistic artefacts:

> By conceptualising and directing the process of creation, producers and directors can bind working artists to the organisation's mode of rationality; originals of a preferred type and quality are more likely, with less labor-power consumed in their production than might otherwise have been the case.

For Ryan, the industrial production of culture shifts the 'right to imagine' from artists to corporate producers, which clearly and forcefully affects the features

of creative work, the ways in which the work is understood and experienced (although these subjective experiences are not often considered in political economy studies). This is essential because, as Caves (2000) argues, very particular economic properties are integral to creative activities – from the 'nobody knows' property to the 'art for art's sake' property – that ensure that artists give their labor freely or cheaply to corporate producers whilst also retaining high levels of risk and uncertainty in relation to, for example, which scripts or screenplays will 'work'. Pang highlights the contradictions inherent in a late capitalist system, the 'new cultural economy' that reifies but simultaneously commodifies creative freedom as much as possible:

> The creative economy continues to rely on the Romanticist notion of the genius-artist to reify creativity, while at the same time overcoming the 'inefficiency' associated with artist discourse. The creative worker might still be characterised by his or her personal artistic sensibilities, but he or she also rationally weighs both creative and artistic considerations to produce saleable products.
>
> (Pang 2009: 58)

As Chapter 1 illustrated, there are two broad modes of industrialized screenwriting labor that determine the amount of autonomy and authority individual writers have to control their own creative work and the uses to which that work is put. This fits within the standard 'dual labor market' picture outlined by creative labor theorists and cultural geographers, what Caves (2000) terms the 'A list/B list' property. Ryan (1991: 136) distinguishes two kinds of labor positions within industrial creative production systems: 'contracted artists' and 'professional creatives'. The former category is 'personalised labor' and represents for Ryan not labor power but the roles of 'petty capitalists' who supply intermediate artistic goods to corporations such as production companies. For screenwriting, this maps onto the labor market in which a small number of 'writer-producers' or well-known, consecrated writers function, survive and flourish at the top end (the 'show-runners' of television for example, and usually male). They are generally able to secure ongoing and rewarding work, are well remunerated, critically recognized, are able to resist attempts to rewrite or change their work and are concerned about their 'property rights' such as residuals payments.

On the other hand, 'professional creatives' are 'supporting artists in the project team [who] are employed on wages or salaries in permanent or casual positions' (Ryan 1991: 138). This is rationalized work, supporting work, 'variable capital to be put to work across continuous cycles of production' (ibid.: 139). Professional creative screenwriting labor for film (and, more routinely in the USA and UK, for television) represents the vast majority of screenwriting work undertaken in contemporary screen production industries at the 'bloated' bottom of the occupational pyramid. Within this category, the multiple, highly complex modalities of screenwriting work come to the surface – treatment

writing, drafting, rewriting, polishing and so on. Screenwriters working at this blunt end of the industry are concerned with security, constantly scrambling to secure future work, lack autonomy and control and face brutalizing and intense industrial conditions, the 'serial corporate churn' characterized by Caldwell (2008: 113).

Drawing together cultural studies and political economic models, it is important to consider the variety of terminology that has been used to analyze cultural industries and creative labor, as well as the ways in which this terminology has been taken up and deployed by national governments and policymakers. Celebratory accounts of a new 'creative class' (for example Leadbeater 1999, Landry 2000, Florida 2004) have argued that the freelancers, professional creatives and independent workers more visible within the economic growth patterns of cities and nations are the vanguard of the workforce in 'post-industrial' societies, embodying the traits – entrepreneurialism, networked, multivalent, flexible – most valued in advanced, neoliberal economies. These celebratory accounts have in turn been taken up by governments keen to invest in their 'creative industries' and 'knowledge economies' and hoping to reap both economic and cultural rewards. Garnham (2005: 20) argues that the documented shift from 'cultural industries' to 'creative industries' terminology in UK policymaking is inseparable from the discourse of the 'information society' 'and that set of economic analyses and policy arguments to which that term now refers'.

More recently, Oakley (2009) has argued that the terminology has again shifted within creative industries policymaking in the UK in the last decade.[5] Notions of 'creativity' have been increasingly but only partially decoupled from notions of 'culture' and 'innovation' has become the newest buzzword, a trend that is now promoting a 'thin notion of cultural value' and has conflated innovation with a bland conception of 'novelty'. Banks and Hesmondhalgh have more vociferously critiqued the ways in which labor *itself* has been almost entirely obfuscated within creative industries policy in the UK and, concurrently, how this policy agenda has become 'increasingly linked to educational and employment policy, but under the sign of economics rather than social reform or cultural equity' (2009: 428). Crucially for this study, film and screen production policies have played a central role in the creative industries nation building of recent decades although, again, labor relations are often invisible within these policy agendas.[6]

Theoretical accounts of creative labor drawn from political economy, cultural studies and critical sociology can, at their best, provide an incisive basis for an analysis of the 'new cultural economy', creative labor and the political investments made in new kinds of cultural policy making. From much of the important scholarship on creative labor,[7] it has been possible to examine how the types of buzzwords mentioned above (from creativity to innovation and flexibility) within contemporary creative economies represent, according to Nikolas Rose, 'new languages and techniques to bind the worker into the productive life of society' (1989: 60). At times, this has meant that conclusions

from this scholarship have, in a neo-Foucauldian vein, foregrounded the notion of creative workers as self-exploitative subjects. This is perhaps because, as Banks puts it, the relationship between 'subject and subjection' in the cultural sector is 'more pronounced', because 'the emphasis [is] placed on entrepreneurial self application and on promoting the self-absorbed pursuit of creative fulfilment' (Banks 2007: 64).

Caldwell's (2008) Hollywood-focused production studies approach, outlined in the introduction, 'steers curiously clear of cultural studies and political economy debates' according to Havens, Lotz and Tinic (2009: 244) but outlines forms of 'industrial reflexivity' that also draw upon notions of neo-Foucauldian subjectivity. He discusses his concept of industrial reflexivity as:

> A creative process involving human agency and critical competence at the local cultural level as much as a discursive process establishing power at the broader social level. This mutual alignment may give film and television entertainment much of its resilience, since the alliance synthesizes the gratifications of human creative resistance with the excessive profitability of new forms of conglomeration.
>
> (Caldwell 2008: 33)

Havens, Lotz and Tinic (2009: 247) call for the use of Foucauldian discourse analysis in order to understand 'the ways that cultural workers maintain some degree of agency within the larger constraints imposed by the structural imperatives of the media industries, their owners, and regulators'. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011: 76) highlight the work of Born (2000, 2005) and Banks (2007) as offering the most 'balanced' appraisals of work and subjectivity in cultural sectors. This work is less prone to the inherent pessimism of neo-Foucauldian cultural studies they argue, and theirs (along with Hesmondhalgh and Baker's itself) are also crucial interventions because they prioritize the normative possibilities of doing 'good work' in the cultural industries, and they examine, in Banks' terms, 'the practical capacities of individualized cultural workers to counter corporate instrumentality' (2007: 67).

A focus on subjectivity and industrial reflexivity at work is central to creative labor studies. What is additionally required, however, is an analytical frame that is also attendant to exclusion and inequalities. As the introduction and Chapter 1 have already illustrated, industrial inequalities are often unacknowledged but primary determinants of subject positions within creative industries and within screenwriting labor markets. Pessimism is hard to avoid when examining the dismal figures that illustrate the entrenched, unchanging lack of diversity in creative sectors. Inequalities determine, very simply, who is in and who is out; who is able to experience 'good work' and who is not; who is able to take up a subject position within particular creative professions and what kinds of subject positions are possible. Taylor (2011: 367–68) has argued: 'Creative working, as unbounded immersion and personalised, emotional labor, demands the masculine selfishness of the conventional creative artist and this

conflicts with long-established gendered positionings of women as other-oriented, attending to the needs of others and heeding their preferences'. Few discussions of creative labor have examined the relationship between creativity itself and markers of exclusion such as gender (notable early exceptions are the work of Rosalind Gill and Angela McRobbie). But these interventions are crucial considering that, as Gill (2002) has argued, cultural industries are still often assumed (in theory, in policymaking, in popular reportage and in representations *within* film or television) to be 'cool, creative and egalitarian'. Discussions of inequality are not yet routine across the field of creative labor, are given short shrift or are ignored entirely, as in most political economy discussions.

Beyond general discussions of industrial reflexivity or self-exploitation, some more recent and nuanced accounts of work in the cultural industries have extended the range of concepts used to consider inequality and subjectivity in creative labor. These accounts draw on feminist epistemologies to analyze the unequal, exclusionary nature(s) of creative labor and the increasing 'unspeakability' of those inequalities for creative workers and subjects (see Gill 2011). As well as the work connecting neoliberalism, post-feminism and gendered creativity outlined in the introduction (such as Gill and Scharff 2011 and McRobbie 2009), contemporary analyses have also focused on the ways in which affective and emotional labor are now central to cultural production.[8] Theories of aesthetic labor have been applied to understand the 'always on' culture of many creative industries and the entrepreneurial and gendered labor demanded in these sectors.[9] This account of screenwriting as creative labor then, draws on these various traditions and approaches, accounts of creative labor from cultural studies, political economy and critical sociology, in order to analyze both the structural and subjective features of the work, both the continuities and changes. This account uses a neo-Foucauldian framework for analysis that is attendant to subjectivity and industrial reflexivity in screenwriting work and is *also* attendant to inequalities, intersections and exclusions that cut across the structural and subjective understandings of screenwriting labor.

Conceptualizing screenwriting as creative labor

Screenwriting can, on the one hand, be understood as an exemplary form of creative labor as it has been theorized to-date. Many of the features of the work of fashion designers, new media workers and below-the-line film and television production workers can be identified as common features of screenwriting labor. For example, inherent features of creative work such as portfolio careers, freelance/multivalent working patterns, the preponderance of entrepreneurial and networked working identities and the lack of industrial diversity can all be identified within screenwriting labor markets in both the USA and UK. Diversification of working practices is often built into writing work. In fact, screenwriting is often a diversifying technique for novelists or playwrights as the Introduction noted, and established screenwriters will generally be working on a number of scripts at once, both original and commissioned work. As Chapter 1

outlined and as Chapter 3 will further illustrate, screenwriting working practices are also examples of 'portfolio careers' that are collated by individuals in order to offset the insecurity and capriciousness that is now built into flexible screen production systems. For screenwriters, this has become an inherent feature of 'getting by' or moving up in their field; the skills required to network, take meetings and pitch ideas have become central to everyday screenwriting careers. As in other creative sectors, the lack of diversity in screenwriting industries has also been identified via scattered but growing data sets, often drawn from government-enacted research initiatives (see Bielby and Bielby 1996, for one of the few academic studies; and also UK Film Council 2006, 2007; Writers Guild of America West 2009, 2011a).

As Chapter 1 illustrated, the Hollywood-centric labor market offers clear parallels with other forms of creative work that encourage degradation, precariousness and marginalization for many workers, resulting in hierarchization, a dual labor market, entrenched insecurity, individualization and compulsory entrepreneurialism. However, there are also a number of exceptional features of this creative work, and the labor market in which it functions that mark it out as distinctive. Screenwriting challenges a number of the 'taken-for-granted' precepts of creative labor theory to date; the features, modes, historical developments and subjects of screenwriting work call into question the ubiquity of terms such as 'flexible', 'new' and even 'creative'.

Screenwriting labor should be separated out from the theorizations of other creative labor forms because of the intensively industrial nature of the work. Screenwriting is a fully industrial creative labor form, one rationalized and standardized from its earliest days and one that facilitates distinctive everyday experiences and particular mechanisms of organization and control. To an extent, this can be explained by the unique features and 'industrial inertia' of the Hollywood screen production industry, as Caldwell outlines in an extended but important comment that distinguishes Los Angeles from London[10] or New York:

> Unlike the creative industries in New York or London that Ross and McRobbie analyse, however, film and television production in Los Angeles continues to survive with less volatility and relatively more predictability than either dot-com or club cultures. This relative predictability follows from a paradox. On the one hand, Hollywood is rather distinctive in maintaining very old forms of Fordist industrial predictability: a massive unionised workforce, a rationalised system of entitlements and inside dealing, and the unique geographical agglomeration of local suppliers, producers and facilities that Allen Scott identifies. On the other hand, Hollywood exploits very new forms of post-Fordism: diversity of tastes, heterogeneous identities, artistic or niche narrowcasting, and cultural innovation as part of a pervasive and edgy new multimedia experience economy. The industrial inertia that results from this mix of normally divergent organisational

> modes – geographic anchoring and industrial continuity alongside boundaryless cultural innovation – gives film and television their historical persistence and cultural resilience.
>
> (Caldwell 2008: 33–34)

Screenwriting labor can be viewed within a creative labor paradigm to an extent, but can certainly not be considered to be a *new* form of creative work unlike other occupations such as those in new media, for example. The histories of screenwriting labor outlined in the previous chapter illustrate the development of industrialized writing. They also highlight the investments made within certain versions of these histories and stress that many of the features that characterize the labor process and subjectify individual writers in a contemporary setting can be traced through the histories of screenwriting. In fact, a distinction between freelance or independent writers and staff writers and the relative positions and attendant opportunities for work this offered were being acknowledged and discussed in early screenwriting handbooks and the wider industry in pre-studio era Hollywood (Maras 2009: 159).

Changes in the organization of the film production industry have certainly followed broader changes in production organization but again screenwriters cannot be analyzed as exemplifying flexible, post-Fordist labor practices in the final instance. Screenwriters – designated as 'creatives' and as 'writers' – have always been, and continue to be, individualized and thus, to an extent, isolated in the experiences of their working lives. This is because of the nature of their work and its placement in the inception stage of a film production often before a project team has been identified and assembled. Simultaneously, writers are called into being within screenwriting manuals as well as in daily industrial working contexts as collaborative and therefore inherently marginal. Their work *only* becomes productive, useful and thus meaningful when it is subject to development, notes and input from other filmmakers and is then produced on-screen leading to a constant and chaotic tension between individualized and collaborative modes of work.

Screenwriting work has also been consistently atomized. Whilst some writers may work in pairs or teams, most experience the writing itself as solitary, even if working within larger television writing teams or other formations. Screenwriters more commonly experience competition on numerous professional levels alongside both productive and punishing forms of collaboration. Again, atomization within screenwriting work can only be understood by grasping both ends of this tension simultaneously. First, practices and experiences of screenwriting selfhood are gained through individualizing tendencies, such as recognizing and working on one's craft skills and strengths within a particular genre – techniques encouraged in screenwriting manuals or seminars. Second, engines of collaborative or communal subject-hood operate in the film industry and have always done so. They aid in the teaching of screenwriting, instructing writers on how to 'play the game' and negotiate development and the rewriting process for example.

The creative drive of screenwriting labor is, and has historically been, highly organized and standardized. This feature of the work is then often used as evidence that screenwriting is either highly secure or highly marginal and degraded because of this standardization. The long-term organization and unionization of the screen production industries offers another important diversion from creative work as it is conceptualized by McRobbie (1998, 2002a, 2002b) and others. Organizational security, the above-the-line status of screenwriters and the forms of marginalization and insecurity they routinely experience are utterly enmeshed. These are both stimulating and brutal labor market conditions and they have profound effects on how screenwriters themselves function; their career trajectories, their creative and craft practices, their daily working lives and their self-perceptions are shaped by these specific and complex dynamics of cultural production. Screenwriting therefore disturbs the concepts of craft, creativity and creative labor as they have been theorized elsewhere. To flesh out these differences more fully, this discussion now turns to the particularities of screenwriting as a form of creative, cinematic authorship, as a form of both writing and filmmaking and an arena of creative production that complicates the boundaries between literary and screen production. Theories of cinematic authorship, largely derived from film studies, help to illuminate the tension between 'writing' and 'filmmaking' and again, between 'creativity' and 'craft' within screenwriting work.

Theories of cinematic authorship and the invisible screenwriter

Theories of authorship as they have been applied to traditional film theory or newer screenwriting studies have had a problematic and contested reception. This reflects the intrinsic problems in comparing literature and film as texts and forms of media; scholarly opinion has generally shunned the idea that a traditional conception of authorship can be applied to cinema. The collaborative nature of screen production is often cited as a key reason why it is untenable to designate films, television shows or other screen texts as the products of a single author with a singular vision. But questions of authorship are clearly central to an understanding of screenwriting as creative labor. As Chapter 1 illustrated, the shifting designations and professional roles that screenwriters have played in screen industries past and present are often determined by the ways in which screenwriting has been defined and legitimated. And particular measures of success that determine levels of creative control – from credits to remuneration to position(s) or role(s) in an industry – also determine the ways in which screenwriters are perceived. They may be powerful writer-producers, auteurs of television or film, or they may be precarious 'hacks', ghostly script doctors or one of many invisible writers working on a studio 'property'. To incorporate theories of authorship here is original and somewhat idiosyncratic because traditional film theory is generally focused on text-based and aesthetic forms of screen study. This focus is traditionally invested in the analysis of screen texts but not often in the labouring practices that produce and shape those screen

texts. This theorization instead is interested in the production dynamics of screenwriting, the working experiences that sit behind and determine scripts and screenplays. And it also involves the analysis of texts *beyond* the films or television programmes themselves – scripts, interviews and screenwriting manuals for example.

As Livingston[11] writes, there are both ontological and epistemological issues raised by the question of authorship. Ontologically, the complex nature of cinematic production tends to mitigate against an easy positioning of one individual as a single 'author' and epistemologically, the difficulty in obtaining sufficient evidence of any particular film's conception and production again makes the authorial process a very difficult one to trace (Livingston 1997: 145). Livingston defines a cinematic author as:

> The agent or agent(s) who intentionally make(s) a cinematic utterance; where cinematic utterance = an action the intended function of which is to make manifest or communicate some attitude(s) by means of the production of an apparently moving image projected onto a screen or other surface.
>
> (Livingston 1997: 141)

Livingston postulates a number of 'ideal-typical' examples of film production authorship. First, an 'authorless' film in which there are a number of 'makers' (writers, financial backers and stars, for example) but no author, no fixed locus of power and control. Second, 'authority without authorship' in which a financial backer initiates a film project but has no artistic or technical skills to contribute. Third, instances of 'taking orders' in which 'a decision relative to an utterance's expressive content is ordained by someone who wields the requisite power … to issue a well-founded ultimatum to the text's maker(s)' (Livingston 1997: 141). Finally, cases of well-founded single authorship in which one individual (usually a writer-director) realizes a clear, singular vision onscreen and contributes in many artistic and technical ways to the realization of that vision. Thus Livingston works to problematize the notion of cinematic authorship itself, suggesting that questions of authorship must be examined in relation to the specific contexts of individual productions.

Gaut (1997) argues forcefully against the concept of single filmic authorship. She suggests that a dominant literary paradigm has been wrongly applied to film theory. This has fuelled auteur theory and has been perpetuated in semiotic analysis of film. For Gaut, the film author(s) cannot be considered as literary author(s) because films are not texts and 'rather than rigidly categorizing films by their directors, films should be multiply classified' (Gaut 1997: 165). She writes that the differences in ontology between literature and film partly explain the failure of claims to single authorship, noting that this is because of their different 'individuation-conditions':

> Literary works are individuated by their texts … but films are not so individuated, for radically different films can emerge from the same text …

> Films are, in fact, individuated by their entire range of acoustic and visual properties and by the casual sources of these.
>
> (Gaut 1997: 162)

For Gaut, this ontological issue (one that Price 2010, has also addressed) can lead to important differences in how creatives interact with their creative products. For example, the ways in which actors relate to and approach their roles variously in plays and films might have implications for authorship. Film actors, she argues, co-determine their filmic characters to a greater extent. Gaut notes some variations in collaborative artistic activities. In particular, film productions need to be considered in relation to the degree to which power is centralized or dispersed in 'determining the artistic properties of a film' and also 'the degree to which the different collaborators are in agreement over the aims of the film and their role within its production' (ibid.: 164). Gaut and Livingston, then, both refute auteur theory and raise wider questions about the theoretical difficulties of equating literary and filmic authorship (questions also raised in adaptation studies, by theorists such as Geraghty 2008). However, they make little mention of screenwriters specifically and do not provide any analysis or consideration of screenplays as literary texts and screenwriters as authors, precisely because they resist designating film production as textual production.

In the mid-1970s, Winston (1973) made one of the only cases for the consideration of the screenplay as literature. Winston notes that John Gassner wrote a foreword to one of the first published collections of screenplays (*Twenty Best Film Plays,* Gassner and Nichols 1943) and, in it, argued 'the rather audacious proposition that the "screenplay" could be considered not only as a new form of literature but also as a very important form in its own right' (Winston 1973: 13). Maras also flags up Gassner and Nichols' work as highly significant in the rise of the 'screenplay as literature tradition' (2009: 51).[12] Winston argues that his motivations for considering screenplays as literary texts are to acknowledge the 'critical importance' of the screenwriting stage in the process of creating a successful film (and here he equates this to a film that could be considered a 'work of art') and to suggest that such an approach could enable a better understanding of the later processes of production such as directing and editing (Winston 1973: 19).

Winston does offer some perceptive insights into the perceived inferiority of the screenplay form as opposed to the novel, noting that, for example, screenplays and therefore cinema rely on 'indirect' as opposed to 'direct' metaphors. He also argues that the many failed adaptations of great literary works into films have worked to distance the two forms, whereas, for Winston, screenplays deserve consideration as literary works in their own right. This is reflected in a contemporary setting in which the publication of screenplays, often accompanied with commentaries from screenwriters, is now a routine practice.[13] Despite the few interventions that have tried to promote the notion of the screenplay as literature, and thus the screenwriter as a principal author of screen products or texts, auteur theory has been hugely influential in film theory

since the 1950s, a theory that has worked to ubiquitize the notion that singular authorship is possible within film production but that the director is that single author.

Auteur theory and authorship

Stam (2000) provides a useful overview of auteur theory as it developed in post-war France in the 1950s and then gained considerable purchase in film theory, particularly as it matured in the USA. For Stam, the motivation behind auteur theory was a search for artistic legitimation that the cinema was struggling to attain. Andre Bazin summed up the theory in his 1957 article 'La politique des auteurs': 'choosing the personal factor in artistic creation as a standard of reference, and then assuming that it continues and even progresses from one film to the next' (Bazin 1957 in Hillier 1985: 255). In a more critical piece, Buscombe characterized auteurism as polemical as opposed to theoretical in intent and was 'committed to the line that the cinema was an art of personal expression' (1973: 75). Crucially for the purposes of this theorization, Buscombe critiqued auteurism in relation to Romantic artistic history, showing that the early *Cahiers du Cinema* writers (particularly Truffaut, Bazin and Rivette)[14] leaned heavily on this tradition in their distinction between a 'true auteur' – that is, a creator of cinema who brings a unique, organic, personal vision to the screen – and a 'metteur en scene'[15] – who is reminiscent of a rule-bound 'technician', copying or translating the ideas of others and not able to produce original work and assert a unique personal vision. Buscombe uses a quote from Rivette to highlight this division: 'A cineaste who has made great films in the past may make mistakes, but his [sic] mistakes will have every chance of being, a priori, more impressive than the successes of a manufacturer' (quoted in Buscombe 1973: 77).

For Buscombe, 'What seems to lie behind such a statement is the notion of the "divine spark" that separates off the artist from ordinary mortals, which divides the genius from the journeyman' (1973: 77) and this echoes the introductory framing of the creativity/craft division also traceable to Romantic notions of individual 'genius' (see also Price 2010). The manufacturer or craftsman as inferior figure is again invoked as a corollary to the artist-creative, the hallowed visionary. Buscombe used this critique to call for a move beyond the hegemony of auteur theory in the 1970s and post-structuralist film theorists called for an even more radical break with this tradition at the time, away from directorial authorship to what Grant (2001) calls 'greater attention to other aspects of cinematic enunciation' (see also Heath 1973, who comments directly on Buscombe's approach). Whilst these early critiques recognized the deficiencies in auteurism and its blinkered approach to cinematic production, they still implicitly invested in the notion of the director-as-auteur (or at least invested in critiquing this position) and made little mention of the screenwriter as another figure who may have an authorial claim, whether legitimate or not. This is striking at least in the sense that a literary, single-authorship tradition is

fundamental to auteur theory/polemic, one that the screenwriter has, by name, a claim to. It is also crucial to note that auteur theory, as an example of theory based on a model of individual creative expressive genius, routinely assumes the auteur is male. Feminist film scholarship from the 1970s onwards used auteur theory in various ways to develop theories of women's film authorship, focusing on particular female directors for example (from Dorothy Arzner to Agnes Varda and Jane Campion) who also often wrote their screenplays (see Grant [2001] for an excellent overview of the development of feminist film theory and women's cinema). And, as Ball and Bell (2013: 550) have very recently noted, 'Existing models of author/auteurship are poorly equipped to deal with women's industrial participation.'

In 1948, Alexandre Astruc coined the term 'camera-stylo' (or camera-pen) in which the perceived connection between film and literature was made clear, and crucially Astruc *did* make reference to the screenwriter. He was at pains to specify what this notion meant for the role of the screenwriter (assumed to be male), arguing that one condition was essential:

> The scriptwriter directs his own scripts; or rather, that the scriptwriter ceases to exist, for in this kind of filmmaking, the distinction between author and director loses all meaning. Direction is no longer a means of illustrating or presenting a scene, but a true act of writing. The filmmaker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen … how can one possibly distinguish between the man who conceives the work and the man who writes it?
>
> (quoted in Winston 1973: 16)

Such a statement cuts to the heart of the subsequent effacement of the screenwriter within auteur theory and, arguably, within film studies and the popular conception of film production generally. While Astruc suggests a scriptwriter could direct their own script, he goes on to articulate the need to remove the scriptwriter altogether in order for the theory to hold water. For him, a script itself becomes meaningless and unnecessary. This concept became a reality for many of the 'New Wave' directors who rejected screenplays in favour of improvisation. But this is a crucial moment of articulation in the standardization of the theory and thus the necessary designation of the industrially immersed screenwriter as a marginal creative input, as at best a rule-bound 'technician'.

Stam argues that once auteur theory was taken up by Andrew Sarris in the USA it became 'a nationalistic instrument for asserting the superiority of American cinema' and this included studio-made cinema (2000: 89).[16] Sarris' manifesto was challenged by Richard Corliss in the 1970s who made an explicit case for the importance of the screenwriter in the face of the auteurist focus on the director. Corliss wrote: 'the director is almost always an interpretive artist, not a creative one, and … the Hollywood film is a corporate art, not an individual one' (Corliss 1974a: 543). Corliss was also concerned with the extent to

which auteur theory had transplanted the creative role of the screenwriter into the director's domain: 'Auteur criticism is essentially theme criticism; and themes – as expressed through plot, characterization, and dialogue – belong primarily to the writer' (Corliss 1974b: xxii). In striving for a re-versioning of auteur theory to include screenwriters, Corliss acknowledges the difficulties in 'classification and evaluation' and points out:

> As with directors, one can distinguish several layers of screenwriting authorship: the indifferent work of a mediocre writer, whether it's an original script or an adaptation … the gem-polishing of a gifted adapter like Stewart[17] … and the creation of a superior original script, like Herman J. Mankiewicz's *Citizen Kane*.
>
> (Corliss 1974b: xxiv)

Stam (2000) argues that the theoretical development of both notions of cinematic authorship and film studies itself continued to question the validity of auteur theory. Writers such as Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1985) and their theory of the 'classical Hollywood style' and Schatz's (1988) discussion of the 'genius of the system' downgraded the role of individuals in the film production process. Auteurism also struggled to maintain relevance in its application to television. Stam notes that television producers were often discussed as the 'real auteurs' in screen production in the 1970s and 1980s (and arguably this continues with contemporary, often male 'show-runners' such as David Chase, creator of *The Sopranos* 1999–2007, and David Simon, creator of *The Wire* 2002–8) (Stam 2000: 91). Stam acknowledges, however, the ongoing robustness of auteur theory, noting its wide application in film studies and in popular celebrations of film. Film publishing is frequently organized around the works of directors, retrospective film showcases routinely present the collected works of particular directors and film scholarship still reverts to the central creative figure of the director.[18]

Thus theories of authorship and auteur theory as they have been applied to film theory have consistently worked (both directly and indirectly) to tie notions of creativity, innovation and imagination in the production of screen works to the individual, masculine genius of the director, and more supposedly pedestrian and collective terms such as 'craft' and 'collaboration' become central to the way screenwriting has been constructed, taught and understood. Grant (2001) also notes that auteur theory has had direct consequences for how film scholarship has been 'done', for example how agency is determined in production processes ('real' vs 'implied' agency for example) or how particular authors are understood or connected to particular texts or 'authorial or spectatorial avatars in the film text'.[19] Certain consecrated screenwriters can be identified as taking on the role of the auteur and often combine the roles of director and screenwriter to gain and maintain this title. Contemporary 'hyphenate' figures or 'contracted artists' (to use Ryan's designation [1991]) such as Charlie Kaufman or Russell T. Davies embody this persona. But a vaguer apparition of

the (often 'name'-less) 'professional creative' writer is clearly visible here: one whose work is at least partly determined and obfuscated by the single, directorial authorship model of auteurism;[20] one who is made invisible and atomized as a consequence of the durability of this model; and one who is thus afforded much less control and ownership than other 'above-the-line' inputs have enjoyed within a system that has at least some residual investment in authorship claims per se.

This is also a crucial point because of the central importance of copyright and copyright protection in the political economy of transnational screen production. Harbord (2007) argues, drawing on Celia Lury, that copyright law now illustrates 'the manufacturing of the subject of authorship' (Lury 1993, cited by Harbord 2007: 50). This represents a contemporary move (and one that is not theoretical but entirely material) to ascribe creativity not simply to the director-as-author but to the corporation itself and all the proprietary and monetary rights that entails over time.[21] As with auteur theory then, the issues raised by Harbord's revisiting of film studies highlight the complexities inherent within the engagement with terms as broad and contingent as 'authorship' and 'screenwriting'. Screenwriting, involving multiple forms of both 'writing' and 'filmmaking', is a creative and craft process that has received little scholarly attention. Harbord does not mention screenwriting for example, although she does argue for the increasing centrality of narrative in contemporary screen production. Scholarly neglect is not itself a satisfactory reason for giving this form of labor the attention it 'so desperately' needs. But it does suggest that screenwriting is slippery enough to have been passed over for serious theoretical and empirical examination, especially in film and television studies in which other creative roles or modes of analysis have been deployed.

Screenwriting research

Few academic studies of screenwriting are available and most are exploratory and urge the need for more in-depth and extensive research, but the field of screenwriting studies has grown significantly in recent years. Nelmes (2007) argues, in an echo of Winston's work in the 1970s, that the feature-length screenplay needs to be considered as a worthy literary form in its own right as opposed to 'the precursor to the completed feature length film' (Nelmes 2007: 107). Recent analyses that examine aspects of the form and process of screenwriting conceptualize it with a focus on the screenplay (Price 2010) and the screenplay as 'a postmodern literary exemplar' (Kohn 2000); as an 'object problem' (Maras 2009); as a project-based career within the Hollywood labor market but one that often highlights issues of exploitation and uneven power relations, particularly issues of diversity (Bielby and Bielby 1996, 1999; Kohn 2000; Judge 1997); a form of writing that raises issues of pedagogy and practice (MacDonald 2004a and 2004b, Nelmes 2007); and an avenue for writers of other forms of literature or for talented individuals (see Hollenback 1980, who analyzes the career of Ernest Lehman).

MacDonald's work (2004a, 2004b) has been influential in the development of screenwriting research as a field of study. He focuses on the amorphousness of 'the screen idea' and the ubiquity of a 'screenwriting convention' within screenwriting teaching and manuals. MacDonald also draws on Bourdieu's field theory in order to sketch out a theoretical approach to the analysis of screenwriting that he argues takes the study of screenwriting beyond how-to screenwriting manuals and enables a critical engagement with the field of film and television production. MacDonald's research is focused on the ways in which the 'screen work' is formulated, constructed and discussed, and is attendant to practices of screenwriting as well as screen-reading. MacDonald takes as his starting point the notion (adapted from Phil Parker 1998) of the 'screen idea' that he defines as:

> Any notion held by one or more people of a singular concept (however complex) which may have conventional shape or not, intended to become a screenwork whether or not it is possible to describe it in written form or by other means.
>
> (MacDonald 2004a: 5)

Thus screenwriting is a 'dynamic and collectivised thought process' but one determined by professional screenwriting 'doxa' and 'a priori' views of the screen idea that are circulated and recirculated within screenwriting manuals, screenwriting courses and by professional screen readers (MacDonald 2004a).

Maras' theoretical overview is more concerned with the dominant ways in which screenwriting has been conceived and understood within history and discourse. For him, this includes three key trends: the emphasis on the screenplay itself as a written plan and thus screenplay fetishism within mainstream understandings of film production; the notion of the screenplay as blueprint and the dominant discourse this has engendered in the mainstream histories of film production; and the concept of 'writing for the screen', which is dominated by a literary notion of writing as opposed to writing with the camera, with bodies, with light and so on (Maras 2009: 172). Maras' contribution draws together a large number of perspectives, definitions and practices around the notion of screenwriting and sets up a 'discourse frame' that

> [g]oes against the common tendency in screenwriting circles to speak about 'the Script' (singular) and screenwriting, in very authoritative ways … It also allows us to focus on an essential and neglected aspect of the history of screenwriting practice: which is how critics and writers invented a practice in discourse.
>
> (ibid.: 15)

A number of key discursive constructs are examined in detail and highlight Maras' concerns, such as the historical separation of conception from execution within the Hollywood-centric industry, particularism within the field of

screenwriting and the construction of discourses around the 'sovereign script', and differing perspectives of the role(s) of the script within wider film production processes. Maras also marshals a large amount of discursive information, drawn from early and contemporary how-to manuals, mainstream and 'alternative' conceptions of screenplay form and content. He examines a variety of theoretical engagements with the topic, from Russian filmmakers of the 1920s such as Sergei Eistenstein to Janet Staiger and her 'modes' of Hollywood production to Balazs' discussions of the script as a literary form. Maras focuses on the goal of illuminating the 'object problem' within the field: 'the difficulty of both defining screenwriting as an object, and identifying an object for screenwriting' (2009: 11). This broader ontological question is one that has also been newly addressed by both Price (2010) and Nannicelli (2013). These theoretical interventions return to the screenplay or 'screen idea' as sources of understanding, as a locus within which traces of the labor of screenwriters or other 'creatives' may be seen (or not-seen). This theorization of screenwriting as labor and as practice continues to develop this trajectory, drawing on these traditions and considering *other* locations for screenwriting as labor – industries, everyday lives, manuals – in which both structural and subjective understandings of creative work, everyday experience and inequality are foregrounded.

Conclusion

This chapter has deployed and assessed a wide range of concepts and paradigms to theorize and understand creative workers and their experiences in the UK, the USA and Europe: media production labor and creative labor studies, industrial reflexivity and subjectivity at work, freedom and self-exploitation. This theoretical trajectory has also considered traditional notions of authorship within screen studies, the rise and continued ubiquity of auteur theory and text-based film studies, and the scattered ways in which screenwriting and screenplays have been analyzed as authored or 'authorless'. Focusing on the particularities of this profession, a theory of screenwriting as creative labor requires a particular and malleable vocabulary. This vocabulary consists of a number of terms and traits that highlight contestations and contradictions – old and new, craft and creative, individualized and collaborative, industrial and invisible, marginal and standardized, atomized and unequal.

The next chapter turns to accounts and experiences of screenwriters themselves – their own understandings of their profession, the daily flows and patterns of the work, and subjective positions and responses to the work. It considers how this creative labor is understood and articulated within the daily working lives of writers. What will become clear in these accounts is that screenwriting is routinely characterized, by screenwriters and their collaborators, as exemplary of the contestations outlined above: between creativity and craft and between individualism and collaboration. In professional discourse, in popular discussions of screenwriting, in interviews and in official and unofficial production stories, creativity and craft are often situated at different points in

everyday writing work and are understood to be both complementary and in conflict. Experiences of pleasure or 'good' work as well as experiences of exploitation/'bad' work are situated in both individualized and collaborative modes of screenwriting labor. These dynamics further distinguish screenwriting from other forms of authorship, from other forms of creative work.

Notes

1 On postmodernization see Bell (1973), Aglietta (1979), Piore and Sabel (1980) and Lash and Urry (1987). On Autonomist Marxism see Lazzarato (1996), Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) and Virno (2003). On cultural economy and cultural geography see Du Gay and Pryke (2002), Scott (2005) and Banks (2007).
2 For example Ross (2004), De Peuter and Dyer-Witheford (2005), Gill (2007) and Kennedy (2011); and see Caldwell (2008) or Mayer (2011) for recent interventions on production roles and reflexivities.
3 Such as McRobbie (1998, 2002a, 2002b), Ursell (2000), Ross (2004), Born (2005), Banks (2007), Gill (2007) and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011).
4 The exhortation to 'work on oneself' is particularly evident in the discursive practices of how-to screenwriting manuals; see Chapter 4.
5 Garnham (2005: 27) earlier argued that in the shift from 'cultural' to 'creative industries' terminology in UK arts and media policymaking, a number of related terms were central: 'access', 'excellence', 'education' and 'economic value'.
6 For a key critical account of the 'international division of cultural labor', globalization, film policy and Hollywood, see Miller, Govil, McMurria, Maxwell and Wang (2005). See Conor (2004) for an account of film policymaking and creative labor relations in the New Zealand film industry.
7 For example Ursell (2000), Blair (2001, 2003), McRobbie (2002a, 2002b), Banks (2007), Gill (2007), Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) and Taylor and Littleton (2012). See also Beck (1992), Du Gay (1996), Sennett (1998) and Bauman (2001) for earlier and influential work.
8 From Hochschild's early work (2003, first published 1983) to the recent work of Gregg (2006, 2011), Kennedy (2011) and Taylor and Littleton (2012).
9 See Entwistle and Wissinger (2006) for example.
10 Although Caldwell doesn't account here for the ways in which these industries are deeply enmeshed – in the flows of screenwriters or other creatives back and forth across the Atlantic for example, or in patterns of trans-Atlantic unionization. For more see Chapters 1 and 3.
11 Note that she, like many scholars of authorship discussed in this section, is focused on cinematic/film authorship.
12 Maras also notes that it was the publication of *Twenty Best Film Plays* that gave rise to the new 'published screenplays' genre although he goes on to note that previous anthologies had been published such as France Taylor Patterson's *Motion Picture Continuities* in 1929 (2009: 51 and footnote 33).
13 Statistics and information on this trend prove very difficult to find. There are no commentaries on the development of this form of publishing, sales figures for the texts themselves are not available and there has been little discussion of this development in academic or popular commentaries on the screenwriting industry. There has been some acknowledgement of the increasing interest in and demand for script material in online forums. 'Script-hosting' websites have increased in popularity in the last decade. McGurk (2008) reports that www.simplyscripts.com received upwards of 12,000 hits a day in 2008 and www.Scipt-o-rama.com 10,000 hits a day, and McGurk writes that a lively 'script trading' market now exists in which collectors buy up multiple drafts of classic or 'hyped' film scripts.

14 Francois Truffaut, Andre Bazin and Jaques Rivette – all French filmmakers who wrote numerous autuerist missives in *Cahiers du Cinema*.
15 Which translates directly as 'scene setter'.
16 Buscombe (1973) had earlier criticized Sarris' approach as one that promoted a 'cult of personality' and utterly decontextualized film production practices.
17 Donald Ogden Stewart.
18 These practices are also highlighted as problematic in the 'European Screenwriters Manifesto' (Federation of Screenwriters of Europe 2006) mentioned in Chapter 1.
19 Grant (2001) cites studies of Dorothy Arzner and a study of feminist discourse and Spanish cinema as examples of a 'reasonably confident return to considering various aspects of directorial "authors" as agents' and, in these cases, female agents.
20 A model that has material consequences in terms of remuneration, reputation and status – see Chapter 1.
21 Space does not permit a full discussion of copyright and developments in copyright law but Harbord's (2007) revision of film theory is crucial, although she does not make specific reference to screenwriting or screenwriters.

3 Screenwriters' working lives

This chapter draws on interviews with a group of professional screenwriters and practitioners based in London, focusing on the diverse ways in which craft and creativity, and individual and collective working practices are experienced and navigated in the UK industry. Professional challenges and tensions – between the various 'modes' of screenwriting work also evident in histories and theories of creative work – structure this chapter and also Chapter 4, in which screenwriting work is analyzed using screenwriting manuals. This discussion begins by tracing the career trajectories of screenwriters, using them to foreground the flow and churn that characterizes their work worlds and the sense of vocation that routinely permeates screenwriting work. It will then discuss the fiercely individualized orientations of this group of writers: their self-disclosures as craft-oriented workers, their individual navigations through transnational and trans-Atlantic labor markets. This chapter also examines the particular creative drive for screenwriters in the development of ideas, drafts and revisions and the professional strategies required to build beneficial industrial relationships and compete for and secure commissions and income streams. This analysis also highlights the collectively oriented calculations that writers perform and enact: the wholly collaborative forms of work that screenwriters participate in, calculations that are strategic and reflexive as well as marginalizing. Across these accounts of screenwriting work and across the next three chapters, the myths and ideals of the profession are referenced and enacted in various ways. These chapters, when read side by side, illustrate how histories of screenwriting work and workers are very much *in* the present, enabling screenwriters to perhaps counteract some of the insecurities and vagaries of their working lives. But as will become clear, the mythic figures of the profession, the individualized strategies that are taught and the self-responsibility that is encouraged also serve to obfuscate insecurities and inequalities. This chapter asks: what do screenwriters' daily lives look like?

Screenwriting career trajectories – multiplicity and vocation

The tracing of a screenwriting career trajectory is a common strategy in the recounting of screenwriting careers (as Chapter 4 will also illustrate). These

types of career stories are highly particular, with varying experiences of education, with varying forms of nominally 'creative' work represented both in and outside the designation 'writing', and are characterized using a cacophony of often conflicting, personalized narratives. This multiplicity demonstrates, as in Chapter 1, the porousness of the screenwriting milieu, the various ways in which screenwriting is 'got to' as a creative profession and a vocation. Multiplicity has been a feature of the screenwriting career from its earliest industrial origins although that multiplicity has been periodically contained or degraded. This could be a reflection of the screenwriting guru Syd Field's (1994) mantra that 'everyone is a writer', that seductive notion that anyone can potentially write a screenplay by following the ten steps to 'success' or by mimicking the trajectories of 'successful' writers. This tendency is tempered, though, by the reality that these biographies are also precarious, are permeated by chronic job insecurity, by needing 'dosh' and often not having it, of aspirations and harsh industrial realities.

All the writers interviewed for this project expressed, in some form, a sense of vocation in relation to the terms 'writing' or 'filmmaking'. Many interviewees 'always wanted to write' and, without exception, their trajectories reflected a gravitational pull in one form or another, from a childhood love of films and stories to lucky breaks that enabled them to transition from one 'creative' role to another: actor to screenwriter; editor to screenwriter; documentary-maker to screenwriter for example. Many times, an interview began by outlining a career biography that referenced a number of 'creative' occupations as well as some type of higher education course, often followed by the key career milestone that is the securing of an agent. Writer A, a writer and teacher, began by making short films, eventually took a short course on writing feature films and then got a 'few scripts in development'. Writer B initially aimed for novel writing, then worked for a production company making animations and 'creative formats' and worked as head of campaign media for a non-governmental organization. He then actively cultivated the transition to full-time writing by writing in the mornings before work and eventually secured a few 'gigs' as well as finished his first spec script that secured him an agent. Eventually, Writer B 'weaned' himself onto writing full-time from home and had maintained that for two years. Another screenwriter-teacher, Writer C, began as an actor and started writing for theatre that was described as 'great fun but no money'. On the back of a play they had written, a producer commissioned them to write a feature version of the script. Writer C became more interested in making films and continued writing, making a living for a number of years through commissions from both UK and US production companies. Writer D, whom I spoke to after his first feature had been produced, had begun at a regional film production program after university and had made short films and documentaries before getting a break writing television.

Writer E spoke demonstratively about her creative drive as a screenwriter. She had undertaken some screenwriting training and her first feature script secured her an agent but financial instability meant she had to go back to her

'day job' before getting a 'nice big film job' for a film and television company. This enabled her to focus on (and survive – 'just') on writing work. Writer F started writing in response to other industry work in which she had to read and analyze scripts:

> So I started writing, partly in response to that, I was writing sort of connective moments, or single lines of dialogue which we were putting in, to get us round awkward corners and things that hadn't worked out.

One project she worked on needed a 'big fix' and in the course of working with the producer, he offered her a television-writing opportunity. On the back of this, she immediately wrote a number of scripts:

> So that was the start, which was extraordinary because it meant that the first thing I wrote wasn't the first script I'd written, I'd written scripts before, but the first thing I wrote for anybody went into production straight away, so that was an extraordinarily lucky break.

Participants who claimed primary job descriptions besides screenwriter (script editor, development assistant or producer for example) also gestured towards vocationalism and made reference to a sense of 'creative drive' in terms of career trajectory and, tellingly, these individual origin stories regularly featured trans-Atlantic movement. Producer A trained at a film school in the USA before moving to the UK to produce, teach and consult and Script Editor A also began working in the USA as a 'joke writer' and agent before freelancing in film and television, building up a resume by 'making scripts funnier' and more 'emotionally true'. Writer A had also trained in the USA 'writing five scripts over two years' and worked as a part-time script reader before returning to the UK to teach. As we will see in Chapter 4, these kinds of movements and origins are also mirrored in both traditional screenwriting manuals and those manuals that feature interviews with elite and consecrated screenwriters, those who have 'made it'.

A number of these screenwriters and professionals based in London had used teaching as a way to build job security into their livelihoods, a role that still offered connections to the industry and fueled their love of writing. In fact, a number of them not only taught, but were writing how-to manuals, were running seminars on aspects of screenwriting work and craft or were undertaking other adjacent industrial positions, and these were strategic roles designed not only to secure income but to 'break into Hollywood' or to secure legitimacy as scholars. Overall, these trajectories signalled motivation and professional confidence. Simultaneously, these multivalent livelihoods were built to cushion individuals against insecurity, precariousness and anxiety (see Chapter 2). As Script Editor A put it in a nicely tautological statement, 'I tend to find the best writers seem to know what they want to write for pretty early on … ' but that also ' … writers will do whatever the hell you ask them to do'.

Individual navigations

> It's sad to say this but try to do things that you think might get made.
>
> (Writer B)

At one level, screenwriters are required to operate as fiercely individualized selves in the new cultural economy. Craft and creativity are deployed to navigate through the British, European and Hollywood labor markets in which finance is scarce and very few 'developed' projects will be produced; ideas are nurtured in portfolios, often for little or no pay; drafts and revisions are labored over in competition with other writers; and disinvestment and pragmatism are cultivated to build beneficial industrial relationships, secure commissions, avoid 'preciousness' and over-attachment to their work and to build income streams. This section takes the form of a series of 'scenes', much as screenplays traditionally do, and it follows the narrative devices these writers used as they described how screenwriting looks and feels at the level of the individual, from the appeal of the form through to getting and juggling work and disinvesting in that work in order for it to soon be 'developed' by others.

Act One, Scene One: the appeals and comforts of screenwriting for the individual

> What you're doing when you're a storyteller, you're flying by the seat of your pants, you're having to use instinct, you've got a million variables, you have to make instinctive choices on the basis of rhythm.
>
> (Writer C)

According to a number of screenwriters, the work is professionally appealing because discipline and structure, which are individually controlled, are integral to its execution. Whilst, as Writer B put it, the first couple of drafts 'has to be a blurdge … a more instinctual process', which he defined as artistic and creative in orientation, the necessary craft of structure is comforting. So, screenwriting was described as 'architectural', as 'the hardest form of writing', visually stimulating, and as 'bound by rules and constrictions' but as simultaneously fun, comforting and 'pure' of form. Structure was described as a defining feature of the profession and as dictating many of the day-to-day decisions that individual screenwriters routinely make:

> The crucial element of screenwriting as opposed to other writing is structure, you know you can be as good a writer as you like, but if you don't have a sense of how to structure a story, then it's not going to make you into a screenplay writer, and that's the overwhelming importance … understanding how to weigh things so that the story is being told in the right order, how to hold back information.
>
> (Writer F)

The standard three-act structure that is outlined and analyzed in its how-to iteration in the next chapter was frequently referred to here, as both the gold standard and as potentially transcendent:

> It has an atomic weight that way outguns its simple length, adds up to way more than the sum of its parts … that's what most experienced writers get excited by, can I pull it off?
>
> (Writer C)

When discussing the particular appeals of the form, those that separated screenwriting out from other forms of creative production cited genre as also uniquely appealing. Genre and structure are regularly connected in how-to manuals and in these discussions with writers generic standards also offered insights into projects and career trajectories themselves. Writer G described his enduring love of horror films and said: 'I set out to write a really straight [genre] film … and the inspiration came from a story I'd read in the newspaper'. Here, genres offered a 'way in', a comforting set of tropes and a canon to reference (he jovially admitted this project was a genre film 'rip-off'). Writer D was interviewed after his first feature film had been produced, a film that was a 'conventional' genre film but had a strong and original 'image' at the center, which served as a useful calling card when it attracted development interest. Script Editor A had secured ongoing script editing work with a small production company who were increasingly 'genre-focused' and he freely admitted that his influence there was a 'commercial' one, which was attractive in the small, Hollywood-influenced British market.

In a number of these discussions with writers and other adjacent creatives, the recognition of one's strengths and weaknesses as a practitioner was paramount. If individuals recognized what they did and did not do well from an early point, they could build up their skills and, further down the line, could work with others who had complementary skill-sets. So Writer A was very clear that she was 'good' on structure and character. Writer G admitted he wrote good scenes and had a natural ear for dialogue but also understood that this was a potential flaw because his scenes and dialogue often gave the impression that a project was going well when it actually was not. He went on to admit that 'I can't help putting in silly stuff' that appealed to his writerly sensibility but also represented an ongoing issue when it came to development because other creative inputs didn't often share his vision for the themes and tenor of a project.

Writer F admitted that she often found she had to put more into her scripts rather than less, that 'extra padding' was necessary and useful (to make a script readable for actors for example) even if it would often be removed in the final cut. This writer felt fortunate that she had had a career before writing that, she emphasized, had been essential to the establishment of her skill-set. Writer E echoed this, acknowledging that she felt 'wiser' as a writer because she had 'lived more' and had had more life experience that fed her 'creative well'. Script

Editor A listed his various industry roles, recognizing that he was regularly hired at both the beginning of projects, as an 'ideas guy' and at the end of projects, as a 'polishing and fixing guy' and that he was able to effectively straddle both positions. This was an effective form of pragmatism, reflected in the large number of projects he was working on simultaneously and serially.

All these moments, in which strengths and weaknesses, skills and attributes were reflexively recognized, bred professional confidence for these workers, able to reflect on their own practice, their positions and careers to date. They were also able to articulate the myriad ways in which the work appealed to them, through concrete tropes such as structure, genre and conventions, which were deployed to clue other professionals into their individual orientations, their interests, their subject positions. Such concrete pronouncements also signaled comfort in the face of acute industrial anxiety. Whilst the vagaries of the industry (which many of them routinely faced) signaled that much was out of their direct control within their work worlds, their strengths and their motivations to pursue the work could and did anchor them in relation to coherent, individual career biographies.

Act One, Scene Two: getting work and keeping work

> It's really important for writers to take responsibility for their stories and own them.
>
> (Script Editor B)

Simply getting work was a consistent and underlying theme in conversations with screenwriters and this was discussed in terms of finding and maintaining 'balance' between projects that come to writers from others and those that originated with them. For example, Writer F described her balance:

> Sometimes people come specifically saying we'd like to get [informant] to do this, and sometimes it's a more general search, and so that's where having the right agent is hugely important. Sometimes there are projects that I already have and I love and therefore I'm going around trying to find somebody interested in it and getting engaged with it, and quite often what happens is that at the end of a meeting with a producer you'll then have a general discussion about you know, what other things are you interested in, and I'll say well we've talked about this and this.

This was reiterated by Writer B who expressed a similar need for balance, but who, because he was not as established as Writer F, had a more profound experience of competitive writing that permeated his interpretation of the concept:

> It's difficult getting the balance sometimes between chasing opportunities, as they come up, and concentrating on your own work and then promoting

> it … so at the moment, at least like, half the things I've worked on have come about because I've been made aware of an opportunity or have been invited to do something, a company have said, "we want to do a project around this, got any ideas?" Recently, I did a treatment for [production company] and it got down to like the last three people they were considering and um, it's not that I get a little cup for being in the last three … in the end they went for the other guy's thing … that was something I'd written in response to their call … we want this and this, ok I will craft something, but actually … you do that and you're almost always in a race with hundreds of people whereas probably, eventually you have to go, these are my ideas, these are my scripts.

Writer B was acutely aware that his tales of 'getting work' were inflected by his lack of track record upon which to stake his reputation. At the time we spoke, he was competing to adapt a novel for a well-known British director:

> For that project, I've probably written five thousand words of analysis of the book, in terms of emails and several hours of conversations and meetings you know, trying to get more meetings with the director set up … and essentially, it's necessary because I can't simply say, look at my last screen outings.

These kinds of explorations and negotiations as one builds up a career were also articulated as building up one's stamina and professional chops, 'working the writing muscle' that could then deftly cope with the unpredictability the industry might dish out:

> It's a trade-off between wanting your own original work out there, wanting to be seen to have a sustainable career … I think you need to be seen as a safe pair of hands, as someone who can deliver on time, who can write treatments and synopses.
>
> (Writer D)

It was also clear in a number of accounts that free labor was an inevitable consequence of pursuing and getting screenwriting work. So Writer B had seven projects in 'speculative development' when we spoke, and admitted to 'doing a lot of work for free' on them, in the hopes that this early investment would pay off further down the development line. Writer E described routinely writing seven drafts for any project (which did not include 'sub-drafts') and described this as 'monumental' groundwork. Writer E had had nine projects optioned and a radio play produced and had 'just' been able to stay afloat although none of the optioned projects had yet been produced.

The need for personal discipline, drive and self-responsibility were also frequently described as essential to getting work and then getting work done at the level of the individual writer. The drive to write was characterized as something,

perhaps one of the few things, a professional writer has control over (for more critical discussion of discipline and 'drive' discourse in screenwriting manuals, see Chapter 4). This personal drive was referred to in numerous ways and it was often noted that other industry gatekeepers looked for this quality when assessing the performance and demeanour of writers. Writer B said, for example, 'agents want a sense of hunger from their writers'. 'Writers need to be exceptionally driven. They need to write all the time and to love it' was the professional advice from Script Editor B. More focused strategies to spur the writing of a screenplay were also tied to notions of personal responsibility. Writer C, a screenwriter-teacher, forcefully argued that every serious screenwriter should be constantly asking one question in the process of writing: 'What is the audience feeling now?' And for this practitioner, it was 'the responsibility of the screenwriter to think about that question'. Personal drive and responsibility could also be helpfully coupled with a strategic approach to modes of screenwriting. Specializing in a particular form of screenwriting was one example of this. Writer F had specialized in certain kinds of genre writing for the British screen market, a strategy she described as 'very practical'. The writer as strategic professional was also obvious in the many references to the relative benefits of film versus television writing. Most of these professional creatives pledged primary loyalty to film and aspired to this as their primary medium as opposed to television writing, sometimes actively opting for more intense career precariousness because they didn't want to be pigeonholed too early as a 'TV writer'. However, they also acknowledged that television writing was often the best pathway to (relative) job security. For example, as an early-career writer, Writer B stressed the need to 'channel both worlds' and was clear that in the UK industry in which finance was always scarce, 'most people are aware that they'll probably make their careers in television drama with forays into film'.

At the initial first draft stage, Writer B said: 'If you've prepared really hard, slaved over your treatment, done everything right, maybe you've done 60 percent of the work'. Of course, that first draft would evolve beyond all recognition and would be pulled apart by the writer and anyone else who subsequently became involved in the project so preparation and structural groundwork was the oft-cited strategy to minimize that necessary creative destruction. However, other writers hinted at the contrary logics that keep individual writers searching for stability and comfort in the face of unpredictability and precariousness. Writer D, who had just navigated a very difficult project gestation process, noted that it was not always the case that 'the harder you work, the better the script will be … it's sometimes about stepping back'. In this case, 'stepping back' meant ceding a significant part of his individual control of the project to other collaborators. Script Editor A echoed this paradox, stating at one point that the industry was often depressing because 'so much of it is timing' and skills can be arbitrary. 'It's not necessarily a skills based industry' was his aphoristic take.

The juggling of projects at a day-to-day level was also a key theme of a number of the conversations and, again, the contrary logics that dictate the

getting and keeping of work were illuminated. Having 'lots of stuff on the go' was desirable for individual writers who could then keep a number of potentially lucrative irons in the fire at any one time. However, the management of such a work portfolio was a further challenge:

> In my ideal world I would have a project that I'm right at the beginning of, a project that I'm in the middle of, and a project that I'm doing the final touch-ups on, but it never works like that, so … at any given time I will have probably half a dozen different projects underway at some stage of development.
>
> (Writer F)

Writer F went on to very eloquently describe the particular problems that such feast-or-famine work patterns have in this industrial context:

> One of the problems that happens quite often is that writers start off, and you write things over several years without very much input and then finally something takes off, and then you get incredibly busy, and so it was taking you six months to get your script into a reasonable state, and now you have six weeks. Oh, this isn't half as good as the one you wrote last year, well it's because I didn't have the time and I've got ten times more people on my back … and I think managing that kind of career shift can be extremely challenging. So sometimes you get a break and then you can't capitalise on it, because you're overwhelmed by the demands that are being put on you.

This sense of unpredictability permeated discussions about the getting and juggling of work and this was often tied to the need to disinvest in the work as a 'survival' technique. This required the recognition of what could be controlled at the level of the individual and a clear-eyed understanding of when that control had to be ceded, when 'preciousness' needed to be purged from one's professional being.

Act One, Scene Three: disinvestment and pride in the work

> You can't be precious about your work, you have to accept that it's going to change, and enjoy that change to some extent.
>
> (Writer A)

Individual screenwriters who get and juggle work, who organize that work and their daily writing lives and who build up and maintain livelihoods must juggle the contrary logics of the screen production industry and the wider cultural economy, logics that call on these workers to take pride in their individual inputs but also be ready and willing to 'let go', to disinvest in their projects as they become collectively managed and developed. Script Editor A put it bluntly,

describing the writer's life in this respect: 'You're being beaten down on a daily basis with people saying no, no sorry, we don't really want your work'.

Many of the writers I spoke to took a highly pragmatic view of these everyday realities, realities dictated by the form of the writing itself and the financial dynamics of the work. For example, Writer F summarized the logics of an industry in which the screenwriter becomes invisible and unnecessary at a certain point in the development of a script:

> It's certainly a survival mechanism, you have to let things go, certainly unless you're a writer/director then things are going to be taken out of your hands and they will make something else of it. If you're lucky you'll get consulted along the way but often you won't … people just don't think of coming back to ask you, what do you think?

Writer B was very quick to point out that 'you just have to get over that', that is, get over a sense of individual authorship and control over a script, and went on: 'with screenwriting, you have producers and commissioners chasing audiences and investing a huge amount in them and I think it's naive in the end to start going around and getting all depressed'.

Again, a strategic approach was invoked as an antidote to this blunt-edged reality. Writer B suggested that a very personally invested script could always be used as a sample script when new professional relationships are sought (with agents or producers for example) and that finding people who 'love the voice' would reap rewards further down the career line. But this writer also noted, again pragmatically, 'it's on the screenwriter to find those relationships and if the screenwriter is forced because of the stage in their career [to enter destructive relationships] that's just cutting your teeth'. At a number of points in these conversations, writers offered their view on the slim odds of success, delivering pithy slices of reality, mirroring the 'shoot from the hip' address of gurus and studio-era screenwriters (see more on this as it is deployed in screenwriting manuals in the next chapter). For example, Writer C, a screenwriter-teacher who also ran workshops and seminars, said:

> The problem invariably is that most scripts are crap, even by good writers they're still crap, so you should definitely spend probably 90 percent of your time getting better and writing and working on that particular piece of work but probably at least 10 percent of any one working week should be getting on the phone, showing up at the right bar.

An antidote to the inevitability of individual projects being personally invested, but strictly to a point (i.e. the point at which money is exchanged for that project or idea), was located in the various ways in which pride could be taken in the work done, in fulfilling one's responsibilities as far as they went. This extended, beyond the remit of the writers, to those other professionals who work closely with writers in a number of capacities. Here, pride and job

satisfaction was found at those points in which the trace of the individual could be found within subsequent versions of a redrafted script. Script Editor A described his individual input thus:

> My role is to come up with ideas and to help a writer who's stuck so the last two things I've done for example, I just came up with the plot … I don't do the actual writing, I do the structure … That's about one in three where you basically end up doing the heavy lifting.

Again, there was a mixture of collaborative pragmatism and personal pride in evidence within this role, the mediating role between writer and director. Script Editor B evoked a 'can-do attitude' as another antidote to 'hurt feelings' at the level of the individual. Writers need to be aware of their audience to be empowered, she argued, individuals should be focused on how to 'get yourself out there and give it a shot', 'build an awareness' of themselves. Producer A also reiterated that over-confidence, even a 'difficult' working style, was paramount for a writer because it signaled creative passion and a refusal to always succumb to development pressure:

> I would rather work with a writer or a director who are slightly tipped towards the difficult side in the sense that they have a really strong vision and are very passionate … more than somebody who's going to capitulate at every turn.

In one sense, the simple fact that all interviews, in which they were asked about career development, working practices, individual perspectives on writing and the industry, were conducted one-to-one means it's no surprise that a huge amount of data was generated about the individual orientations of this group of writers. It was as individuals that they described their research, the gestation of particular projects, their strategic pursuit of new work, their own balance between writing and meetings for example. However, it was also clear that the collective navigations and calculations these individuals experienced were utterly central to their conceptions of their own craft and creativity as it differed from other forms of creative production; that collaboration offered intense appeal *and* opened up individual writers to the exploitation of their labor and their intellectual property. There was a recurring sense of forward motion here. The writer first begins a discrete screenwriting process as the originator, author and dictator in terms of subject matter, theme and progress. Writer B described that pleasurable early stage in this way:

> My favourite bit is making something at the beginning, when you're carving something out of nothing and then ideas begin to come together and you, you find yourself sitting on the bus pulling out your notebook and constantly making another note on that project … and then there are holes in it and those puzzles are solved … and that's exciting and fun and kind of

> odd … at that point, it's the most pristine it will ever be, it's playful, it's adventurous.

At some point, however, one that was different and difficult for every project, the collective force of development takes over, other inputs stake a claim on the ideas and their form and a new phase of 'screenwriting' as communal creative process begins. For some, the combative nature of this stage was inevitable and natural, echoing the mythic tales of studio-era Hollywood writers as preyed upon by power-hungry producers:

> This is I think where producers can subsequently take out their revenge because at the beginning of the process they are completely in the thrall of the writer and when they'll deliver and the vagaries of the writer's existence … so once it's done then they can decide, right, now I'm going to screw with you and that's when they dick them over as much as they can … so I think it's very much a power-play game.
>
> (Script Editor A)

This discussion now moves into the collaborative zone(s) of screenwriting work worlds and, whilst combat and competition are features of these narratives, it is also clear that in discussions and experiences of collaborative screenwriting practice there are a wealth of examples of social creativity, of script development and screenwriting work as playful, as productive, as nurturing.

Collaborative calculations

This next section focuses on the collaborative calculations that these writers performed and enacted, the wholly collaborative forms of work that screenwriters participate in, calculations that are savvy and dramatic as well as frequently exploitative. Chapter 4 will go on to illustrate that how-to screenwriting manuals frame and enact the working techniques of rewriting and collaboration as both individual and collective. These more contingent aspects of screenwriting work are characterized as self-driven in some cases but also as 'notes'-driven, as dictated by the feedback and input of others. These London-based writers described collaboration and development as requiring amenability, emotional flexibility, diplomatic combat and, sometimes, 'slave labor'. A number of development tales were told that reflected the screenwriters' historically circumscribed position(s) as atomized, as supplicative and as invisible. However, discussions of screenplay development also evoked creative positions that were savvy and highly reflexive.

Act Two, Scene One: yes, yes yes

> When a producer asks a writer to do something, the writer should say 'yes, ok, let's do it' … whether you do it or not is an entirely different thing.
>
> (Script Editor A)

Collaboration as a necessary phase in the screenwriting labor process is one that was consistently characterized as requiring amenability, an ability to say 'yes' in every meeting, to say 'yes' to every note from every new input who comes on board. As Script Editor A put it, 'always be amenable in a face-to-face meeting with a producer, choose your fights carefully'. This epithet, 'always say yes', was repeated in a number of forms and can be read in two divergent ways. First, writers are always in a position of inferiority in the development process, are always working at the behest of others and are required to simply smile and 'take it'. Conversely, the underlying sense was that the writers were the superior force in these encounters, would say 'yes' in order to placate the multitude of voices weighing in on a project, but would continue to serve the script as they saw fit, maintaining control by seeming to give up that control. So, emphasizing the screenwriter as a supplicant figure (see MacDonald 2004a), Writer C said: 'The key probably to being a happy collaborator … is to be comfortable with the notion that as a screenwriter, you're the second most important person in the business … you need to pass the authorial baton to the director'. Script Editor A placed the writer and producer in opposition, much like the studio-era polarization of writers versus studio bosses: 'Writers do have all the power … and I think this is a very clever bit of work by producers to make them feel disenfranchised'. But an analysis cannot begin and end with the one-dimensional portrait of the hopelessly exploited worker. Writer C, who spoke of the writer as needing to accept their secondary status, went on to use the example of a well-known writer friend who maintained control of his development work: 'The first thing he does is re-read his own draft and make quite a detailed set of notes. When he goes into a meeting, he's the person who takes control of the meeting'. This was presented as a highly practical strategy; it ensured that the writer simply had a job for the next draft, calibrated the project as a whole and instilled confidence in his production team that this was 'the man for the job'.

Confidence – for writers and development partners – was often linked to notions of mutual respect in the giving and taking of 'notes' on script drafts and many screenwriters were clear that notes had to be given respect and attention, whatever their substance and motivation. Writer B said he always tried to remain 'open' rather than 'closed' in the development process, that a specific note usually raised a problem of some kind in the screenplay and thus they 'are always worth listening to'. For example, he suggested, a lack of warmth in a character may be about the situation the writer has created for them and notes can be indicative of the invisible but dysfunctional elements of a screenplay. The ability to 'confidently reappraise' one's own work in light of a set of notes was viewed by Writer B as a paramount skill, one that then bred further confidence in one's navigational abilities in the unpredictable and hydra-like worlds of 'development hell'. Writer D argued that ignoring notes or considering oneself 'above' them was simply arrogance on a writer's part.

In terms of an ideal development attitude for a young writer, Writer B said he constantly calculated and asked himself 'what does the person across from

me want?', noting that opportunities can be spotted and exploited if a writer is nimble enough. Writer F described this as 'mental and emotional flexibility':

> You have to be simultaneously passionate and able to defend your point of view and to offer creative solutions all the time … and at the same time go ok, I don't think your way works, but I'm going to really try and make it work, and not just kind of go through the motions, but if this is the way we're going to do it, then it's got to be the best possible version of this way, so it does take … a special kind of mental and emotional flexibility.

She went on to use combative terminology in summarizing the strategy she takes when dealing with a large meeting involving numbers of development executives who are all wanting to 'make their mark' on a particular screenplay: 'Fight without seeming to fight too much.'[1] Diplomatic fighting skills are needed and she noted that this again would foster confidence in a meeting room if the writer is viewed as combative and willing to defend their work. In fact, Writer F noted that there is generally 'admiration for the creative temperament' that calls up those familiar, Romantic assumptions of creative artists as 'difficult' though brilliant, tortured by their own talent. This kind of discourse also perpetuates those durable and comforting polarities – for example, between art and commerce, or between creative workers and uncreative development executives. Interestingly, tales of these encounters were often recounted in playful terms, framed as offering dramatic possibilities for writers who anticipate (often rightly so) that development meetings will inevitably lead to the erasure of their individual creative control.

Flashback: protecting the script

> Um, so … I'll tell you one story on the kind of ludicrous side of development.
> (Writer B)

In one of the most in-depth and wide-ranging discussions with a writer, a development process was described that encapsulated the dramatic and playful possibilities of screenplay development work:

> One project I was working on, I was working with another writer, and whenever we took a meeting about things we'd written, there were always four or five people in the room, either the producer, the director, then the company's head honchos, finance person … and again, because it's an insecure industry and nobody really wants to be perceived as the person who's not having value or insight, but at the same time it's sometimes bewildering to know what to do … in every scene, we would build in a couple of lines, a couple of beats that were mis-steps, that were badly conceived, slightly clunky, slightly mis-written, purposefully. … and we

> would build them so that in cutting them, in changing them, it would be a better scene. … and we'd put them on the table and in the meeting. …
>
> Inevitably, someone would, everyone needs to have their say and someone would go like, 'this for me isn't working', and we'd go 'oh, no do you think?' And they'd go, 'yeah … ' and we'd go, 'well maybe we can cut it, maybe we don't need it' and they'd go, 'that's what you need to do' and then everyone can go: 'Yup, that's what you need to do to get this scene working' and it just means that instead of, like, having a scene that is otherwise working fucked with because nobody wants to leave a meeting going … 'we are useless individuals because all we're doing is saying well done', it gives everyone something to do, everyone can feel good, and we come away with a scene …
>
> I know it's profoundly cynical …
>
> (Writer B)

Here, the development process is a competitive game – the writers have anticipated a development negotiation and, during the writing process, have padded out scenes and acts with 'mis-steps', 'clunky', mis-written beats. They have done so precisely to protect the integrity of their script and its core ideas, exactly as Hollywood writers were doing in order to undercut the Hays Code in 1930s Hollywood (see Chapter 1). Writer B, reflexively describing the whole process as 'cynical' (echoing Powdermaker's Mr Cynic from 1940s Hollywood; 1950: 140) fueled his own professional confidence, his ability to defend his ideas in the face of those who are concerned with their autonomy and their own individual reputations. This strategy offers the producers, executives and financiers ways to be 'involved' and also directly challenges them, asking them to prove their knowledge of screenplay construction and storytelling by spotting the mis-steps. This example of collaborative screenwriting is playful, challenging and self-reflexive. However, the underlying tenor to this scene is that writers are still on their own. As creative workers positioned at the inception phase of a project, they may wield superior intelligence and skill but they are also bound up in fundamentally combative relationships with their 'collaborators', those who are, by dint of their proximity to industrial realities, less skilful, less creative and often self-serving as opposed to script-serving. And as Chapter 4 will further illustrate, this is also a primary discursive mode for screenwriting manuals, that screenwriters are savvy and knowing *but* must also/always 'know their place'. These kinds of strategies recur in various forms and serve as defense mechanisms for writers who are simultaneously seeing their work degrading or diluting, seeing their scenes being 'fucked with' by over-zealous 'collaborators' wanting a hand in the development process.

Of course, such negotiations can stem from other creative inputs and were often articulated as cynical but *necessary* in the juggling of different perspectives. Script Editor A described editing a number of scripts in which 'some essential element' was missing. He went on to describe how he navigates between a producer and a writer in such a case:

> It's awful to say this but it's [...] narrowing down the genre to make sure the genre fits the target, that's usually what the producer wants. The way you sell that to the writer is well, actually we're focusing on this character.

Here, the editor negotiates with the writer in terms of a writer's 'creative' drive and the producer is engaged in terms of commercial realities and the editor serves as the savvy conduit between these two languages. Again, this is a confident subject position but also perpetuates that durable and dramatic distance between the creative temperament of the writer and the industrial temperament of the producer (or director, or studio boss ...).

Act Two, Scene Two: development 'off the rails'

> Oftentimes the writer gets blamed when they aren't necessarily the ones at fault. (Producer A)

In keeping with the enduring myths of the screenwriter as misunderstood and marginalized, as defensive and supplicative, tales of 'development hell' further fuel this mythic well. In discussions with writers and other filmmakers in London, collaboration and development were often illustrated with 'off the rails' anecdotes, with tales of credit disputes tinged with fear and misapprehension. These tales were usually told with diplomacy, with the benefit of hindsight, with temperance. Producers spoke about the 'breakdown' of a development process often stemming from slight misunderstandings. Producer A described the nuanced ways in which development can veer off-course simply by force of numbers:

> A lot of cases, you often have a couple of producers and at some point in the journey it's easy for there to be several voices weighing in on the project and I think that one of the things that I find really easy, if you're not careful, is that everybody in that team is making a slightly different movie in their head.

She went on to acknowledge the difficult position in which writers are often placed; that is, the position of blame:

> It's easier to blame the writers, so I think that writers have a hard job ... because I think they have to answer to several masters and the masters don't always agree ... so it's a schizophrenia that the writer really has to try to stay on top of.

This image of the writer as schizophrenic resonates with the historic myths of the writer and individual creative as tortured, as misunderstood and as suffering. The requirement to 'play the game' during screenplay development means that these writers juggle multiple voices and positions, wants and needs, in defending and preserving work and then are still offered only a secondary

position. So the heroic writer toils to keep everyone happy whilst letting others take the credit although they may retain some self-perception as the puppet-masters of the work to preserve their professional ego (for more on egotism, see Chapter 5). The 'schizophrenic' nature of development from the writer's perspective was highlighted during another conversation with Writer D, a writer whose first feature film had been produced and had had a long and difficult gestation. In the course of retelling the narrative, the writer spoke of juggling the notes of multiple producers and companies. He had then been required to consider script input from other external stakeholders and had had to negotiate a writing credit dispute. By the end of this retelling, the writer took a 'realistic' approach to it, acknowledging that the film had been made (an achievement in itself) and that he had had to simply 'get over it'.

Script Editor B used the term 'fear' to describe the nature of development breakdown:

> The thing that most often leads to the breakdown of the development process is fear, followed by not listening. The not listening is just as likely to be the producer, the director, the writer or the financier not listening, or even more than one or all of them. The fear is everybody's, because it is a scary industry … Fear makes people behave badly, or even just a bit wildly. In particular it makes them stop listening, and it makes them fight.

The issue of credit for screenwriting work was another recurring theme in a number of the descriptions of screenplay development. As Chapter 1 outlined, credit disputes have been a key locus of historical accounts about the power, or lack thereof, that writers can wield. It is clear in the retelling of these stories that notions of individual creative authorship are still influential. Early-career writers often described collaborative situations as ones in which they had limited bargaining power and other creative inputs sought co-writing credits that they were unable to dispute. But again, these were carefully described in pragmatic terms. Writers did not want to be viewed as complaining, as resentful about the 'realities' of the industry:

> As a first time writer you're incredibly grateful … for a large part of the process … and it's not to say that you have to become ungrateful but you have to sort of get over yourself … and say, OK, they employ me, it's a job, it's work, it's presumably good, otherwise I wouldn't have got to this point.
>
> (Writer D)

Writer D continued by describing the need to accept the situation and 'move on':

> So I sort of went with it and you have to say, well to an audience, who honestly cares … I mean at the time it was difficult but you know, no one's putting a gun to my head.

Writer F described the situation writers often face in terms of loss of credit (and thus, loss of creative and authorial control) as a moral one *and* a historical one:

> I think there's a significant problem in that if you come with an original piece, you can often be put in the position of having to sell everything, sell all your rights to it in order to get it off the ground, and then you can be taken off your own project, and I think that's morally reprehensible, you know it's legally reasonable but it's really inappropriate. You don't buy a piece of art and then go I think I'll have this repainted by Damien Hirst. If you want to commit to somebody's own personal project then you have to commit to it in a serious way. So there's a big problem and I think it's a historic problem, that writers started off as being studio-hired hands.

This writer returned to the debate about screenwriting as a less creative form of writing than playwriting or fiction for example, in which the writer's claim to single authorship would never be disputed in such ways. She also connected this to the misheld but widespread perception of film as a director's medium. Writer E described her worst experience of script development as 'slave labor by numbers':

> I felt really abused on one project … I went far beyond the contracted schedule to keep them happy … I knew I was working too much but I also knew I was so miserable I needed to try and get a project. I felt I was writing by numbers, it was slave labor by numbers … my creative passion did go. … and I think lack of confidence and feeling, oh my god I can collaborate, I've got to prove myself, I think I totally sold myself out.

Again, this writer was able to confidently appraise this experience in hindsight. She noted that this process had produced her 'most polished' screenplay to-date and that it helped her build up a reputation as collaborative and, therefore, a 'good' writer. This was another recurring feature of professional horror stories, the ability of the writers to reflect on their perceptions of the process and their own role(s) within them. Writer G whose horror story was protracted and painful, noted simply: 'For all of the complaints, I think a lot of it comes down to naiveté on my part'.

We know that horror stories serve a productive purpose for writers and have arguably always done so for creative workers. They are a potent form of currency within the screenwriting community and the filmmaking community more generally. This was again highlighted in encounters with writers in which such laboring stories were recounted dramatically, with wide eyes, pauses for effect, the finest points of detail in the development process listed. This reflected a need to make sense of these encounters and more elaborately to prove one's own endurance and longevity as a writer. Horror stories indicated that one had 'done time', had faced the slings and arrows of the business and was still standing, with credits to one's name. And these stories were also routinely

connected to the mythic figures outlined in Chapter 1 – the studio era writer-for-hire or the lone, tortured maverick facing off against a Mack Sennett or an Irving Thalberg. The histories of screenwriting as a special and specially tormented creative profession were powerfully and repeatedly referred to. This strategy tempers the palpable sense of atomization and isolation these stories also suggested.

Act Two, Scene Three: creative collaboration

> Somebody else can spark you up.
>
> (Writer A)

Although stories of 'development hell' (and this widely used term itself) nicely perpetuate the age-old mythic tropes and conflicts of the filmmaking world and its schisms between creative and uncreative people, screenwriting as collaboration was also described as just that: as positive, as nurturing, as a process of continued creation and crafting as opposed to dismantlement and destruction. Writer A said she had only ever had good working relationships and said that an individual sense of isolation and resignation was often alleviated by another creative input:

> It's so easy to lose the tension somewhere and things can just fall flat … you don't realise you've done it until someone reads through and you have to have a lot of trust with the person you're working with, your producer or editor or whoever, because it's very easy to lose track of what you're writing … and somebody else can spark you up as well, if you feel a bit flat.

Often, the connection between the terms 'screenwriting' or 'filmmaking' and 'collaboration' were described as simply logical and obvious. Producer A stated forcefully that filmmaking is '[t]hat creative energy which is created by several people working together' and Script Editor A argued that screen production is '[t]he most collaborative of creative processes'.

A number of initiatives were referred to in which writers had actively pursued an alternative to the standard screenwriter-as-supplicant narratives, seeking positive relationships and development trajectories. Writer E had met two producers who were interested in her script but had little money to develop it and she describes her approach here:

> So I said to them look, don't pay me … because they don't have any money, so I said, I'll invest the rights but I'll be a producer as well, so we'll split the deal and I thought, well, I know my script is commercial … I've given them the rights for a period, that's my investment as a producer, that's what I think a way to go as a writer is here.

This was reiterated by Writer F who referred to the importance of the Writers Guild of Great Britain and the US Writers Guilds as sources of industrial and

collective guidance and support.[2] However, in an industry with no history of widespread collective organization for screenwriters (and in an industry with declining union membership in general, see Chapter 1), the straitened production dynamics of the industry continue to place writers in the supplicative role (Powdermaker's Mr Acquiesce embodies this trait nicely [1950: 141]). These screenwriters were the ones required to be amenable, savvy and individually reflexive as they navigated and negotiated their work-worlds. This also means that the perceived dissonance between individual and collective modes of screenwriting work persists. Even at the advanced development level, collaboration is still largely viewed and experienced in individualized terms; as competitive, confrontational, exploitative, isolating and, generally, disadvantageous for screenwriters.

As something of an antidote to these straitened production dynamics, new and relatively cheap digital technologies are touted as now enabling writers and directors to bypass traditional development or organizational channels altogether. Interestingly, this topic came up a number of times during the writers' discussions of their present and future work and sometimes hinted at an escape from the traditional polarities that animate the practices and livelihoods of screenwriting work. The creative freedom and autonomy afforded by new media was suggested in a number of tangential ways and directly in a few cases, in which writers had worked on projects with a significant online or digital element. Writer C was clear that writers could 'help themselves' if they felt hard done by in the current labour market by simply making films:

> Fortunately the nature of the industry has changed a little in that it's much easier to make very low budget films now than it used to be … and so there's now no excuse … if you're feeling frustrated as a writer and you want to make a movie, go make a movie.

Writer H had done exactly this. He and a co-writer and producer had conceived a feature film idea, had undertaken conceptual artwork and had made a 'teaser' trailer for a film they had not yet written or made. They then built a website for the project, posting the trailer that eventually 'went viral', generating more 'buzz' and then interest from producers in the UK and USA.[3] For this writer-director, such a direct strategy was designed to 'build a world' for the project and thus attract finance so the film could *then* be written and produced. Writer D had juggled not only multiple producers during the production of his debut feature film but digital components of the development process. In contrast to Writer H, Writer D downplayed the interactive element of this particular situation, noting that he already had notes from many producers and 'didn't need any more', but the precedent was telling. From his point of view, this represented not a form of emancipation from the shackles of traditional development but simply another input to juggle. Writer B had been commissioned to develop a project for a television production company that was originally a one-hour television show but 'with an online universe so audience members

could be in it'. This developed over time once other production voices came on-board and it was described as a 'very experimental format', combining documentary, educational programming and gaming. Overall, Writer B felt it had developed into something unwieldy:

> In a way, I think the project kind of ended up sprouting a couple too many heads … lost some of its simplicity … I've mixed feelings about its performance in the end.

These future orientations do suggest new possibilities in terms of defining and practicing screenwriting itself, as well as new possibilities for collaborative script development or, more broadly, 'world building'. In each of these cases, the practice of screenwriting loses its focus on the standard 'blueprint' screenplay, on its format, its traditional stages of development, its standard trajectory from individual written document to multiple-drafted and redrafted document.[4] But again, self-responsibility is encouraged, even demanded. As Writer C put it, there's now 'no excuse' for feelings or experiences of what Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) would call 'bad work': creative frustration, a lack of creative autonomy and involvement in the entire production process, chronic marginalization.

Conclusion

Screenwriters embody a particular set of creative frustrations and disappointments in a capital-intensive production system. To conjure up the historical image of the screenwriter as hired hand for example, or to recount a professional horror story, enables contemporary writers, in small-scale ways, to reflect on the multiple meaning(s) of their work. And this means that although forms of 'bad' screenwriting work abound in both historical and contemporary industries, collegiality can also be fostered via these devices. The shared language(s) and forms of currency that have developed through histories of the profession enable screenwriters to talk to one another, to talk to other collaborators and to understand the particular appeals of the work. This chapter, then, has drawn together a number of thematic strands in order to illustrate the pursuit of lives and livelihoods by a number of screenwriters and filmmakers within the London screen production labor market in order to understand something of the texture and tenor of daily screenwriting lives. There are a number of vectors for screenwriting work and its professional practice, from individualized modes of writing to collaborative development. These accounts from writers working today also highlight the various ways in which screenwriting is made knowable and doable. Screenwriting work is both highly individual and often atomizing. This is because of the need to find and juggle work, job security and satisfaction, the need to compete with others within a straitened and rapidly changing industry, and the need to disinvest in the work and accept one's secondary status. However, it is important to emphasize that the work is also experienced as

challenging and exciting. It is a particular form of creative production in which creativity itself is contested and craft is comforting.

Screenwriting is also wholly collaborative, a form of work in constant dialogue with a number of other inputs that are variously and meaningfully constructed as 'creative' or 'less-' or 'un-creative', which returns us to the difficulties, laid out in the Introduction and in Chapter 2, of designating any profession as 'creative'. Here, professional strategies are routinely deployed to protect core themes and ideas, to secure another draft or another job, to promote individual working selves as amenable and collaborative. Screenplay development also opens up into the realm of the horror story, the narratives of 'development hell' that can be difficult and painful but are also used as currency, as teaching tools and as indicative examples of, again, the particular and contested nature of screenwriting as creative production. In order to effectively survive and prosper in such work-worlds, a number of connected screenwriting subjects are called into being as writers and filmmakers talk about the work they do. These are self-responsible subjects that enable navigation and calculation day-to-day, that foster forms of solidarity within labor markets but that also require screenwriters to compete and to fight.

All these strategies and practices will now be analyzed using another site for screenwriting work, how-to screenwriting manuals. Whilst many of these same themes are apparent within how-to discourse in relation to the work, the next chapter will also illustrate that manuals are disciplinary tools. They are another possible site for forms of collegiality, collectivity and comfort for screenwriters. They recruit new aspirants into screen production industries, they offer 'all the answers' for new and established writers, and they represent legitimate income streams in writers' daily lives. But as Chapter 4 will illustrate, screenwriting manuals also perpetuate individualistic, conservative and exclusionary notions of what screenwriting is and how it should be done.

Notes

1 For more on the gendered nature of combat metaphors, see Chapter 5.
2 Although other informants disparaged the role of the Writers Guild of Great Britain in the UK screen industries. For more on recent and important initiatives from the WGGB, see the Conclusion.
3 When I spoke to Writer H, he was about to go to Los Angeles for two weeks of meetings and 'networking' with producers who had contacted him and his writing and producing partners after seeing the trailer. The writer was hoping this would lead to further contacts and financial support for the next phase of the film's production, the writing of a feature-length script.
4 For more on new media and digital futures for screenwriting work, see the Conclusion.

4 Screenwriting work and the how-to genre

Screenwriting work is constructed, facilitated and regulated by how-to screenwriting manuals and, more broadly, the how-to genre. Manuals about how to be a screenwriter and interview collections with 'successful' screenwriters about their work are ubiquitous but offer little systematic analysis of the histories, practices and identities that form and shape the daily working lives of screenwriters. After building up this analysis in Chapters 1, 2 and 3, this chapter now draws on critical discourse analysis of a selection of the most popular how-to screenwriting manuals, as well as data drawn from interviews with writers. This chapter examines the ways in which the genre concretizes and regulates the profession through a particular set of hegemonic codes and conventions – structure, characters, conflict, entrepreneurialism and precariousness. But more generally, the how-to genre and particular 'guru' voices, such as Robert McKee's (dramatized in the film *Adaptation* [2002]), are sources of self-help style advice on the foundations of storytelling, the universality of this creative form. And what is interesting in the filmic representation of a guru such as McKee is that there is a very large, dramatic and comical gap between McKee's voice and the inner voice of Charlie Kaufman, the screenwriter protagonist. McKee is strong, clear and forceful, utterly confident. Kaufman is wracked with confusion, doubt and self-loathing and he is also contemptuous of aspiring writers (including his twin brother Donald) who look to gurus and manuals for professional advice and guidance.

Screenwriting as a creative career is propped up by the wealth of these how-to texts that purportedly offer the tools and skills required to become a model screenwriter. The texts have a long publishing history aligned with the standardization of screenwriting labor outlined in Chapter 1. Arguably, they have played a pivotal role in this standardization process. Maras (2009) notes that in the early silent era in the USA, an extended network of screen writers, editors, reviewers and journalists ran question and answer columns in publications such as *Moving Picture World* and *Photoplay*, which formed the basis of the 'advice-giving' context of the subsequent texts such as Epes Winthrop Sargent's oft-cited *Technique of the Photoplay* (1912).[1] As noted in Chapter 1, this early publishing period is often referred to within the wider context of 'scenario fever' (see Maras 2009: 139).

This inception period established and mobilized the need for advice on how-to itself – that is, how to write for the screen. For Maras, this is because of a number of discursive factors such as the immediate emphasis on understanding what the studios would accept in terms of scenario ideas and a focus on 'adequate and inadequate narratives' (2009: 142). Early handbook writers (such as Esenwein and Leeds 1913: 221–73) inform budding writers of exactly 'What you cannot write', 'What you should not write' and so on. These early texts were also preoccupied with technical details and specifications, down to offering advice on the correct use of paper and envelopes as well as providing sample synopses and scenarios to demonstrate format. There is also evidence of the early splintering of the genre, including the development of a selling and marketing subgenre, a category still clearly in evidence in the slew of contemporary entrepreneurial titles discussed further below. Maras (2009) cites titles including *The Photoplay: How to Write, How to Sell* (John Arthur Nelson, 1913), *How to Write for the 'Movies'* (Louella O. Parsons, 1915) and *Cinema Plays: How to Write Them, How to Sell Them* (Eustace Hale Ball, 1917) and uses key authors to illuminate moments in the historical/discursive process of writing for the screen: France Taylor Patterson in the 1920s,[2] Dudley Nichols in the 1930s and John Howard Lawson in the late 1940s. Just as in the screenwriting profession, although not always explicitly acknowledged in professional histories, both men and women have written and continue to write screenwriting manuals, including some of the most well-known women screenwriters: Anita Loos, Frances Marion and Elinor Glyn (who had her own 'Elinor Glyn system of writing', see Francke 1994: 20).

Maras (2009) ties his discussion of early handbooks to the developing 'collective identity' of screenwriters and his wider notion of the 'particularism' embedded within the discursive formations of industrial screenwriting. He argues that early handbooks often made reference to the need to carve out a space for screenwriters, to 'draw borders around their craft' and thus offer some protection from hostile directors, studio executives and so on. Gritten's (2008) analysis characterizes early British how-to manuals as sites of struggle over the advent of sound in British filmmaking. Here, the development of a particular professional practice for industrial writers is contested and debated within the manuals of the day. As with contemporary titles, Maras argues that many early how-to authors invoke a sense of 'insider knowledge' and 'the particularist impulse informing the handbook genre gives it a pedagogic quality, separating players from non-players in a broader game of industry, in which industrial knowledge belongs to a social minority' (2009: 163). Bordwell argues that contemporary screenwriting manuals represent a 'consolidation of studio-era principles' in an era of decentralization and commodification of production (2006: 27). Thus he talks of a 'flood of manuals' for aspiring writers keen to break into the industry and needing practical advice on the now-pedestrian concepts such as format and plotting. As Bordwell goes on to argue, above all, the script had to win the support of gatekeepers, the development staff known as readers or 'story analysts' (2006: 28). For Maras, Bordwell's discussion of

handbooks is useful but limiting; it 'becomes a reflection on structure, on the details of three-act structure, its source (as "trade secret") and institutionalization' (2009: 156) and, for him, this is a depoliticized discussion that assumes the industry standards as opposed to critically examining or reflecting on them.

This chapter, then, offers a critical analysis, both of a selection of manuals themselves and of their construction of screenwriting labor, but also of the ways in which manuals are written and used *by* screenwriters, especially those whose career biographies and professional strategies were outlined in the previous chapter. Screenwriting manuals are now key elements of the curricula in a wide range of pedagogical frameworks for screenwriting in higher education; and they serve as educational tools, offering both friction-free paths to success and a ready alternative to higher education courses. While this chapter focuses on an analytical sample of how-to texts, it is clear that how-to discourse now proliferates across a range of platforms and sites. How-to books are often published in concert with seminars given by their authors and books are also used in many script and story consultancy businesses. In more recent years, how-to gurus such as Robert McKee and their narrative models have been incorporated into digital and online platforms and spaces – *Final Draft* screenwriting software, subscriber-based how-to websites and how-to blogs for example.[3] This chapter asks then: how is screenwriting work circumscribed and regulated by how-to manuals and how and why do screenwriters use them to work? It will illustrate that how-to discourse is both omnipresent and unstable; it is repudiated within and outside screenwriting practices, classrooms and production spaces as much as it is used to entrance and recruit.

Analyzing screenwriting manuals and screenwriting labor

Chapter 2 outlined the importance of understanding screenwriting labor using the traditions of political economy, cultural studies and the sociology of cultural production. This chapter continues to use these traditions to outline the socio-economy of screenwriting manuals, and partners this with critical discourse analysis to analyze the discursive techniques that characterize the genre and particular texts, and the tactics screenwriters deploy when using them. It is focused on the precarious nature of the texts and the ways they are used by writers in their daily working lives. In particular, Caldwell's (2008: 4) 'integrated cultural–industrial method of analysis' is useful here because, as mentioned in the Introduction, Caldwell develops a methodology that focuses on and categorizes industrial work, artefacts and rituals in the study of production labor across three 'registers'. How-to screenwriting manuals function differentially across these registers as 'fully embedded', 'semi-embedded' and 'publicly disclosed' deep texts that exemplify and, arguably, facilitate 'intra-group', 'inter-group' and 'extra-group' industrial relations (Caldwell 2008: 347). As this discussion will illustrate, manuals are often written by (or with the direct input of) writers and for writers and other production 'groups' such as producers or commissioners. At these intra- and inter-group levels, screenwriting manuals

function, as Caldwell identifies, like how-to manuals for other production technologies or 'trade and craft narratives and anecdotes' (ibid.). But they are also written for aspirants, for students, for a lay audience, and thus they facilitate 'extra-group' professional exchanges about screenwriting labor for public viewing or consumption.

As outlined in Chapter 2, Caldwell's analysis outlines forms of 'industrial reflexivity' in film and television production in Hollywood, drawing upon notions of neo-Foucauldian subjectivity (as do Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009). The how-to manuals analyzed here are important sites of the production of industrial reflexivity in relation to screenwriting labor and move beyond, but also incorporate, personal biographies and accounts of daily work from screenwriters. The texts invoke and then work hard to reinforce the *ideal* subjectivity for a contemporary screenwriter of film and/or television, much like the writers whose biographies and experiences were recounted in Chapter 3. How-to manuals represent, to use Rose's (1998) terminology and a neo-Foucauldian framing, a type of psy-technology. They are an intricate form of self-help, offering aspirational possibilities and tools to budding writers. They provide advice from gurus, script consultants, script readers and screenwriters on how to be a writer, how to harness one's creativity, how to organize one's daily writing life, how to 'Steal fire from the Gods' as one manual claims (Bonnet 2006).

Rose has argued that a relatively new strategic dimension of the psychotherapeutic is the subjectification of work (1989: 244) and the manuals offer a particular platform for the subjectification of screenwriting work, the discussion(s) of the various laboring techniques that will lead to success, fulfilment and autonomy. Rose (1992) locates psy-technologies within a broader 'enterprise culture' that has come to dominate neoliberal Western societies, in line with those theorizations of the new capital-intensive cultural economy cited in Chapter 2, from Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004) to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005). These texts can then also be read as activating forces for the 'germs of talent' (Thrift 2006: 283) of individuals as they navigate a new, 'flexible' cultural economy that requires particular capacities: 'emotional commitment, entrepreneurial adaptability, a combination of team conformity and personal ambition' (Couldry and Littler 2011: 263).[4] Screenwriting manuals offer a dominant framing for enterprise culture within screenwriting work. Screenwriting selves are constantly called upon within them, to function as autonomous and responsible workers and are reminded of the traits needed to 'make it' within the profession – energy, initiative, ambition, calculation and personal responsibility (Rose 1992: 146). These are traits that, as the previous chapter illustrated, are both displayed and contested by screenwriters in their own talk. The manuals analyzed here call on writers to dream up their careers as screenwriters and then self-steer those careers – to develop and reflect on their process and to corral and master their story ideas, their individual and collaborative working techniques and their conduct within screen production networks. The manuals are also wholly taken up with highly technical practices. Concrete

techniques from crafting characters and seeding conflict between them, to writing treatments, step outlines and rewriting, are offered up as ways to perpetually work on oneself as a writer, to make the screenwriting self utterly 'thinkable and manageable' (Rose 1989: 248).

A representative sample of popular and classic manuals (see Appendix A) were consulted for this analysis. The texts analyzed were often recommended by the writers we heard from in Chapter 3, were included in reading lists for UK-based screenwriting education courses and were frequently cited in published interviews with screenwriters and in popular discussions of the screenwriting industry. Once selected, the sample was divided into categories[5] and, in the discussion that follows, two kinds of manuals are identified: a range of popular, traditionally formatted manuals including the oft-cited 'gurus' of the genre (Field [1994], McKee [1998] and Seger [1994] for example) and a subcategory of the genre based solely on interviews with 'award-winning', named screenwriters: Katz (2000), Engel (2000, 2002) and Iglesias (2001).[6] Scant data on sales figures and readership demographics as well as a paucity of empirical research into the ways in which the manuals are used means that it is difficult to construct a comprehensive overview for the genre as a whole but some indicative publishing statistics for key 'guru' texts are included in Appendix B. As well as certain guru texts produced via imprints of large publishing houses such as Random House and Harper Collins, there are a number of specialized publishers based in Los Angeles (such as Silman-James Press and Michael Wiese Publications, MWP) that offer a rolling slate of how-to manuals. MWP's biggest selling title, Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* (1998), sold 200,000 copies across its first two editions. In general, sales figures are not high although numerous editions of a publication signal the longevity of particular titles, as does the inclusion of titles on reading lists for screenwriting courses or script development agencies for example. In the discussion that follows, findings are presented across the generic sample as a whole and examples are drawn out from the analysis of 'guru' texts, interview-based texts and second-tier texts.

The structure of this analysis mirrors the empirical discussion of screenwriters' daily lives in the previous chapter. First, a number of concrete 'knowable' practices are consistently discussed within the manuals and these are analyzed as individualizing techniques for ideal screenwriting work. Second, the manuals are examined as sites of the production of contingent, collaborative modes of screenwriting work. Rather than offering a counterpoint to individualizing discourse, this chapter illustrates that the manuals knit individual and collective forms of writing together. This mutual reinforcement means these texts are exemplary psy-technologies but are also unstable and exclusionary texts within screenwriting labor markets. Overall, the how-to genre operates via a range of techniques: the expertise of the 'guru' author; the proliferation of lists, steps and rules; the use of self-help discourse drawing on the tropes of humanist psychology; and the discussion and deployment of creative labor in particularly delimited ways.[7]

Concrete knowable practices: addressing the screenwriter as individual worker

Viewed as a genre, how-to screenwriting manuals are key sites within which screenwriting labor is made utterly knowable and 'doable' and, at one level, the texts proffer a singular address to writers as autonomous individuals. They present a number of key strategies for writing screenplays that function as individualizing mechanisms, shaping the writer's work and their perceptions of what screenwriting can and should be. Initially, a sample manual regularly conceptualizes the craft of screenwriting, focusing on defining the term 'story' as McKee (1998) does, and providing a standard trajectory from story idea through to finished product and the selling of the completed screenplay. This reflects Chiapello and Fairclough's observation that other kinds of how-to management texts are 'embedded in an actional sequence which potentially moves from acquiring knowledge to applying knowledge, from learning to doing' (2002: 197).

How-to screenwriting schemas in the sample varied somewhat in relation to the technical terms used or the focus given to one or another element of structure, character, dialogue or format but the trajectories map onto each other in strikingly homogenous ways. How-to manuals foreground the most basic elements of a scripted story and revel in its inherent simplicity. The terms: beginning, middle and end, the 'building blocks' of any screenplay, are consistently repeated. Many gurus and authors argue that Aristotle's work on story is foundational and that the classic elements of story have a proven longevity and universality. So while the generic sample collectively strives for the up-to-date and the new, it also relies on discourses of the ancient and the timeless (see Tierno 2002). Universality is itself a problematic and exclusionary device considering that not all cinematic storytelling traditions are based on individual (usually masculine) protagonists. However, without fail, screenwriting manuals evoke the universality of this kind of dramaturgy.[8] Interestingly, Caldwell (2008: 18) pinpoints the use of Aristotle as an example of instrumental 'self-theorizing' that is now so ingrained in the Hollywood industry it is simply 'common sense'. Such a touchstone, he notes, serves to stabilize an individual's daily writing life within a capitalist-intensive industrial production system. This is a system that is, conversely, increasingly unstable – bifurcated, deprofessionalized and deeply exclusionary as Christopherson argues (2008: 85). Chapters 1 and 2 have analyzed these changing features of this industry (as Chapter 5 will more fully explore) and in the discussion that follows, note that these features of the industry are often masked or ignored in screenwriting manuals.

One of the most uniform rhetorical strategies of the how-to genre is the recourse to structure. Structure is viewed as central to a successful, original and commercial screen story and the discursive employment of structure represents a key technique deployed to concretize screenwriting labor. This reflects a key theme of the previous chapter, in which structure offered primary creative and craft appeal for screenwriters in London. As William Goldman (1983: 195), a

guru whose part manual/part memoir is something of an industry bible, writes: 'SCREENPLAYS ARE STRUCTURE' (capitals in original). This mantra provides a core tenet for the teaching of screenwriting craft within the manuals and even more prescriptively, the structure itself is a largely unvarying one, the three-act structure. The guru Syd Field (1994: 7) is cited as the modern proponent of this paradigm and the various editions of his text *Screenplay* are focused on its use in writing and selling scripts. Aronson (2001) uses the three-act structure as the foundation of her section on narrative structure and Seger (1994: 18) proclaims of the model: 'Why you need it and what to do with it'. The message espoused is that *anyone* can learn the craft of screenwriting by taking up the limited and repeated techniques offered, adhering to the structural calculations and formulae upon which so many 'classic' and 'successful' films and television programs are based.

Certain other guru and second-tier manuals develop the three-act structure, most notably the mythic structure outlined by Vogler (1998) or the 'sequence approach' (see Gulino 2005). Some titles (for example Dancyger and Rush 2002) also stress that a 'classic' narrative structure needn't be strictly adhered to and that the beginning-middle-end model can be up-ended to generate original and alternative narrative structures, thus lending a heterogeneous sheen to an otherwise homogenous discourse. Alternatives to traditional structural models may be offered as evidence of progression and the possibility for autonomy but are also simultaneously revoked and contained.[9] Many texts provide, along with detailed prescriptions and formulae, analyses of the structures of films that both did and did not 'work'. Consecrated works such as *Chinatown* (1974) are frequently dissected in great detail, as are more overtly commercial and highly profitable Hollywood films such as *Jaws* (1975). These analyses then lend the weight of the Hollywood canon to the manuals themselves and their various claims are deployed in the service of achieving success on the scale of the 'greats' of filmic writing and directing. Individual manuals and gurus are then intimately connected to the particular mythic films and figures that animate histories of the profession. This discursive technique works to acknowledge the limited flexibility of the standard narrative structure while also reinforcing the accepted and common sense rules that screenplays 'must' abide by. Structure-centric how-to discourse is individually oriented, and writers are encouraged to master this element of their labor in order to succeed in the collaborative stages of writing. Overall, standardized story structure within screenplays is constructed as paramount, as 'natural law' as Caldwell (2008: 18) puts it.

Additional laboring techniques described (and therefore, prescribed, in a form of discursive 'slippage' that Chiapello and Fairclough highlight [2002: 201]) as essential elements of successful screenwriting work include the creation of characters and the deployment of conflict. The discussion of character-building strategies routinely employs self-help discourse to encourage budding screenwriters to search for depth, originality, motivation and 'soul' within their characters. McKee argues that the 'energy of the protagonist's desire' is the 'spine of the story' (1998: 194). McKee also expresses the need to 'write from the inside

out' in order to attain emotional truth within a screenplay; this means the writer must work inside the minds of his/her characters (ibid.: 152) and, in fact, fall in love with one's characters (ibid.: 383). Vogler argues that the archetype of the hero 'represents the ego's search for identity and wholeness' (1998: 35) and that the hero's functions range from audience identification to growth and action.[10] Seger writes about the creation of 'dimensional characters' and outlines three key dimensions: the thoughts of a character expressed in values and attitudes, the actions of a character and the emotions of a character (1994: 180).

Sample texts variably employ humanist psychological concepts and jargon to lend their advice further legitimacy. Aronson (2001) cites De Bono's 'lateral thinking' techniques in the exercising of the creative muscle and Webber (2000: 19) suggests that budding writers use psychologist Abraham Maslow's 'seven basic human needs' as a jumping-off point for character development. This echoes Prichard's (2002: 270) analysis of the business guru John Kao who also uses Maslow as a tool for the development and discipline of individual creativity at work. Creative workers, learning through these texts to be structure oriented and to be aware of and attuned to their individual creative drives, are thus taught to draw their characters out of themselves via their own motivations and desires. In order to create both moving and dimensional characters and a tight and coherent structure, many how-to authors stress the need for conflict as another crucial node of the successful screenplay.[11] The call to conflict is again echoed across the various texts in mantra-like form and this is not unlike the framing of screenwriting labor itself as necessarily combative (see Chapters 3 and 5). For example, Seger (1994) outlines four 'standard' levels of conflict along with a fifth ('cosmic' conflict) while McKee (1998) identifies three. As a genre, the manuals represent a site of a particularly rigid and durable set of instructions and exhortations based on individualized discourse. They legitimate themselves by highlighting their universality and insider knowledge and the careers they offer are based on singular, elite-oriented and commercial values.

(Mysterious) creativity and (concrete) craft

Manuals based on interviews with elite screenwriters are also preoccupied with the craft and creative processes of screenwriting and, as the traditional manuals do, provide a myriad of insights into the strategies and skills that individual, established writers employ in their work. In some instances, interview material sits closely with the advice of the manuals and in other cases screenwriters' voices in manuals offer advice directly at odds with the prescriptions of a 'guru' such as Robert McKee. Certain elements of the creative process are invoked by screenwriters in interview texts regularly, particularly notions of instinct and other suggestions of 'inherent' creativity. Elite screenwriters in manuals articulate, in varying ways, the instinctual nature of the writing process and this theme is at the core of the 'creative' aspects of screenwriting for these writers. Such insights also work to build up a mystique around the process, a mystique similar in character to the 'secrets' of the industry that so many manuals

describe. As Iglesias says, 'No one can tell you what this mysterious creative energy really is. It's not a formula' (2001: 4). The screenwriter Ron Bass (*Rain Man* 1988) is quoted: 'When I write it's really like auto-writing; it's not quite a conscious act where I have to think, "And then he says and she says". No I'm not doing that; I just am everybody. I'm being it and watching it and am not even aware that there's a process going on' (in Engel 2002: 59). This is very much akin to Writer B's 'blurdge' description in the previous chapter. Horton Foote (*To Kill a Mockingbird* 1962) uses the word 'instinct' to describe his work (in Katz 2000: 67) and so does Leslie Dixon (*Pay it Forward* 2000): 'So much of what you have to do here is by instinct' (in Iglesias 2001: 30). Amy Holden Jones (*Indecent Proposal* 1993) also invokes the idea of 'trusting' one's instincts but attaches this not to one's inherent creativity but to more practical considerations: 'you need a strong commercial instinct' (ibid.: 124).

The interview manuals highlight both the ways that craft skills can be learnt and the substance of these skills. Most of the elite writers interviewed by Iglesias, Engel and Katz agree that writing is 'self-taught' and is 'learnt by writing'. They are often quoted as suggesting that watching films and reading published scripts are crucial in order to recognise both well-crafted films and films that don't 'work'. Iglesias cites Eric Roth (*Forrest Gump* 1994) for example: 'I learned by just being a film buff. I loved movies and I knew the language. The rest you learn by writing' (Iglesias 2001: 31). In particular, 'successful' writers used in how-to manuals agree that it is structure that can be learnt and taught (as did the writers in Chapter 3) and this extends not just to the structure of a screenplay itself but also the structured process that one must undertake from first draft through to final draft and polishing, again reinforcing the normative screenwriting convention identified by MacDonald (2004a).

At times, elite writers are very specific about the processes they use early on in a script's life in order to generate ideas and then a first draft. Ron Bass calls his process 'matrixing', stating that he notes down 'every idea that comes to me, whether it's about plot, structure, character, dialogue, theme or tone' (Iglesias 2001: 44). Robert Benton (*Kramer vs Kramer* 1979) describes a similar concept: 'The first draft merely blocks in the characters, roughs in a story line that works and hopefully establishes a beginning and ending that is satisfactory' (in Engel 2002: 37). Some writers create a distance from processes that traditional 'guru' manuals signal as 'sure-fire' strategies for success. Nicholas Kazan (*Matilda* 1996), for example, states: 'I don't use cards or any structural diagrams. I just write notes and outlines, thoughts about characters, dialogue and scenes' (in Iglesias 2001: 44). However, comments from elite writers more often directly mirror the prescriptive style of the manuals as a whole. Akiva Goldsman (*A Beautiful Mind* 2001) recommends McKee's screenwriting seminar and presents what can only be described as a sure-fire formula:

> Four acts, or really three acts but the second act is really two acts … and they're generally 30 pages long and they generally have cycles of rising and falling action. Or you can say something happens on page 30, something

> bigger happens on page 60 and something really depressing happens on page 90. And then something totally amazing happens on page 120.
>
> (ibid.: 52–53)

Overall, the consensus from interview-based manuals is that solid research and outlining inevitably leads to the start of the first draft, at which point 'storycraft', as Iglesias puts it, becomes imperative. This then naturally leads to the rewriting process, the assumed next step in the standard structure of the craft. Scott Rosenberg (*Con Air* 1997) provides a clear link between the process of outlining and the craft of screen story structure: 'When I feel ready, I sit down with a legal pad and I number it 1 through 70 and I write a simple sentence for each beat of the story and I end up with an outline where I know what my first act break and my second act break are' (in Iglesias 2001: 53). Discussion of structure and 'storycraft' leads to a similar set of concepts as the 'guru' manuals prescribe. Familiar elements such as the three-act structure, 'Aristotlean' techniques and notions of rising tension and conflict are all invoked and repeated. Iglesias (2001) refers again to Maslow's human needs as Webber (2000) does in her manual and specific snippets of instruction or advice pepper the interviews as well as less concrete insights that still invoke a sense of 'instinct'. For example, Steven de Souza (*Die Hard* 1988) argues that a great story is 'a delicate balance between foreshadowing and thwarting the audience's expectations' (Iglesias 2001: 130). Again this echoes the comments of the screenwriter-teacher, Writer C, who argued that screenwriters had a responsibility to repeatedly ask one question during the writing process: 'what is the audience feeling now?'

As in the guru manuals, universality is also presented as a key concern of storycraft and, for Iglesias, this seems to provide a substitute for the concept of commercial instinct. He argues: 'If you write for the market, you eliminate the magic, and all that's left is perspiration and that's no fun. However, with this in mind, you should still think about the universality of your script' (Iglesias 2001: 126). Overall, whilst dissension is a common discursive tool within manuals of various kinds, offering different perspectives on the use of structural models, numbers of rewrites required or the efficacy of how-to itself, the screenwriting convention is nevertheless reinforced. Familiar concepts and 'common sense' aphorisms, from conflict to structure to 'write to be rewritten', are utilized in interview texts as in the traditional manuals and this serves to tighten down the disciplinary functions of that convention. If even 'Oscar winners' use systems such as 'matrixing' or structural formulae or Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, new screenwriters or aspirants are further conditioned by the standard, 'universal' and natural tools of the trade.

Entrepreneurialism and enterprise

The enterprising nature of the genre produces and reinforces an ideal screenwriting self within a commercial industry – the entrepreneurial writer who should spend as much time pitching, selling and networking as they spend

writing. For Seger (1994: 117), making a screenplay commercial requires attention to three elements: (a) marketability (the writer must consider issues such as the script attracting and accommodating 'name' stars for example); (b) creativity (which she characterizes as originality within a script and a successful 'hook' early on) and (c) structure (which must be 'tight' and 'smooth'). Wolff and Cox (1988: 7) dedicate a section of their book to 'Turning the craft into a business' and from the very beginning of their text, ask their readers to 'Check the saleability of your idea' and Trottier's 'bible' (1998: 208) features detailed advice on the selling of a script including a 'strategic marketing plan'. Many more second-tier texts used their commercial orientation as their *own* selling point, echoing the earliest manual titles of the 'scenario fever' era: *Writing Screenplays that Sell* (Hague 1989), *How to Make Money Screenwriting* (Friedmann 2000) and *Raindance Writers Lab: Write and Sell the HOT Screenplay* (Grove 2001). The screenwriter's entrepreneurial subjectivity ('Life's a Pitch' as Friedmann [2000] declares) is characterized as necessarily sensitive to both one's individual creative voice (the assumed source of originality and innovation), and the dictates of the always-precarious screen production market in which 'nobody knows anything' (Goldman 1983). This true-ism is highly effective in undercutting any security these texts offer as career-building tools. An unsettling sense of insecurity and sheer luck pervades the market-based rhetoric of the how-to genre. Thus successful screenwriting labor is coded via a bewildering set of directives to concentrate on creative drive *alone* but also (and a separate, intuitive selling self is here called into being) constantly write with the unpredictability and constraints of the market in mind.

The highly prescriptive and technical discourse that is ubiquitous within screenwriting manuals offers solace and comfort to those individualized and isolated selves who are the subjects of the manuals' address at this level. By following the steps and filling in the checklists, a screenwriter can produce a screenplay with the requisite number of pages and scenes, the correct font, the essential conflict between protagonist and antagonist, the beginning, middle and end. In many ways, how-to texts provide the easily graspable tools to bring out the screenwriter in us all – a nifty echo of the 'Everyone is creative' mantra that has percolated through the UK's new cultural economy via creative industries policymaking (see Chapter 2 and McRobbie 2001). The discursive power of this genre is in simultaneously producing individual careers (by offering the tools, advice and 'insider secrets') and moulding those careers (by establishing and maintaining the industrial conventions). But, just like the personal and biographical accounts from screenwriters presented in Chapter 3, screenwriting manuals are also awash with the more contingent discourse of collaboration and development, of screenwriting work as social and collective.

Rewriting and collaboration in screenwriting manuals

Achieving mastery over the techniques of rewriting and collaboration is articulated in the manuals as both individual and collective. These more

contingent aspects of screenwriting work are constructed as self-driven in some cases but also as notes-driven, as dictated by the feedback and input of others. Just as screenwriters expressed in Chapter 3, they are sources of both pleasure and pain at work. The majority of the manuals stress that rewriting is a concrete and crucial element in the process of screenplay writing. For example, Trottier (1998: 92) writes that in the rewriting process one becomes a 'script surgeon' and this means the writer must 'whittle down the dialogue; remove unnecessary narration, flashbacks, dream sequences, and so on'. The step-by-step writing process, from outline to first, second and third drafts, to polishes and so on, is a standard formula, one perpetuated by industrial expectations. Rewriting is discussed as a concrete and executable process but is inherently tied up in the collaborative nature of screenwriting, a multifarious process much more difficult to prescribe and quantify in textbook form. The texts invariably construct collaboration as a skill all writers must master or be willing to put up with, and the contingent nature of collaborative screenwriting work is made both material and unpredictable in particular discursive ways.

Collaboration is variously materialized across the how-to genre but a key technique is the recounting of a collaborative story and the manuals use particular kinds of narratives in this context. Rather than collegial, longitudinal, and flexible collaborations (such as those often practiced in independent and low-budget film and television production contexts; see Murphy 2010 for example), the collaborations that the manuals describe are much more likely to be elite oriented, standardized and hierarchized, with the writers, directors, producers and other creatives knowing their places. So for example, in his chapter on collaboration, Syd Field recounts a typical anecdote about an elite collaboration in the writing of the film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981):

> Lawrence Kasdan, the screenwriter … met with George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. Lucas wanted to use the name of his dog, Indiana Jones, for the hero (Harrison Ford), and he knew what the last scene of the movie would be … That's all Lucas knew about *Raiders* at the time. Spielberg wanted to add a mystical dimension. They spent two weeks locked up in an office, and when the three of them emerged, they had worked out a general story line. Then Lucas and Spielberg left to work on other projects, and Kasdan went into his office and wrote *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.
>
> (Field 1994: 231)

Field goes on to write that this is a 'typical' Hollywood collaboration, everybody 'working together' for the finished product. This is constructed as the 'way things are' because as Field (1994: 255) later warns, writers will be second-guessed and rewritten and that, too, is the way the industry works. This common-sense framing is again reinforced by a variant technique, the straight-talking testimonial from successful writers:

> For me, the problem is not the rejection, but the random factors of the industry … half the time it's a horrible experience because the movie gets cancelled and the other half it's a horrible experience because the movie gets made anyway, completely reinvented.
>
> (de Souza cited in Iglesias 2001: 22)

The manuals deploy the terms rewriting or collaboration to offer unvarnished career advice, suggesting, in the light of horrors the writer often faces in the development process (as recounted in Chapter 3), ways to stay sane, maintain control of their work as much as possible and potentially negotiate a somewhat secure position within the industry. Friedmann (2000: 60) puts it this way: 'While you may have little control over the actual production and direction, you owe it to yourself to provide the best script that you can. Rewriting is one of the ways of achieving that'. It is again the acquiescent and supplicative screenwriter who is evoked in the recounting of collaborative stories:

> The thing about rejection is that you should never make the people who reject you feel particularly guilty about it. Often, when they move on from you to someone else who doesn't work out, if you haven't made them feel guilty, it leaves the door open for them to bring you back.
>
> (Holden-Jones cited in Engel 2002: 190)

Collaboration is an amorphous term across the genre but also reads as a concrete 'self-steering mechanism' (Foucault 1988) that inculcates screenwriters into the accepted ways to conduct themselves, interact with other filmmakers within the industry, write screenplays that will be funded and produced and build reputations to secure future work. The variety of practical rewriting tools the texts offer bind highly individualized screenwriting techniques to contingent collaborative discourse but rather than producing a diluting effect (offering new insights into communal or social forms of creative practice for example), screenwriting manuals construct collaboration in ways that foster further competition, atomization and insecurity for their readers. As Prichard puts this in his discussion of discourses of creativity in management texts:

> Rather than regard creativity as spontaneous, collective, rebellious and chaotic, 'creativity' (note quote marks) is configured as sets of individualised performable dispositions by which we come to know and work-on ourselves (Townley, 1994; 1995) – in the pursuit of material and symbolic rewards.
>
> (Prichard 2002: 272)

The modes of collaboration the how-to genre invokes are starved of collegiality and 'collaboration' as a discursive construct is employed to further isolate creative workers. The genre offers success, creative freedom and all possible answers but the parameters of the labor are always circumscribed and contained – deep

attachment to the work proves both necessary and necessarily fatal. Screenwriters are placed within collaborative stories or testimonials as workers who must be realistic about their precarious industrial positions, be prepared for the contingencies that notes from other filmmakers will produce and be accepting of the insecurities and relentless competition this can and will provoke. This is another space of screenwriting labor, then, in which disinvestment from the work, from characters and scenes, is encouraged and required.

Because the interview-based manuals are generally concerned with the careers and stories of individual writers, detailed narratives on the writing and development of particular projects provide the bulk of information and these narratives range from positive experiences that the writers often speak of as providing 'turning points' in their careers to negative and traumatic horror stories that they struggle to recover from, just as the writers in Chapter 3 described. Most of these individual accounts are framed in pedagogical terms as acutely symptomatic of the 'collaborations' that the screenwriter engages in during the development process. Again, collaboration is a malleable term in this context. While some writers certainly describe elaborate script meetings and discussions with producers and directors that lead to further drafts or rewrites, collaboration may also occur remotely – with no contact between the 'original' writer and subsequent writers or other 'contributors'. Katz uses Mark Andrus to describe his experience of 'working with' James L. Brooks on his spec script, *As Good As it Gets* (1997), a process that amounted to Brooks rewriting Andrus' original. After watching a rough cut of the film, Andrus says: 'I was just sitting there in love with what Jim Brooks had done to this' (in Katz 2000: 118). Brooks, by turn, found it a positive individual experience, noting that he went from a position of producer who was polishing the script only, to becoming 'lost' in the work:

> [R]especting what Mark had done … I think the two of us formed this extraordinary alchemy, because we're very different, and yet we each did personal writing and poured our hearts out, so that we ended up, I feel – and I think he feels as well – like a real team.
>
> (ibid.: 105)

Such an experience is still an isolated one for these writers. Andrus and Brooks did not have story or development meetings but both emerged, Katz informs us, satisfied with the final product and the 'melding' of their writing.

This type of experience is often presented in interview manuals as paradigmatic example – Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard worked in a similar distanced collaboration on *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and, again, both reflect positively on the end result (in Katz 2000: 175–91). Creatively satisfying experiences are also evident in direct collaborations between writers and directors. Goldman discusses his healthy working relationship with director George Roy Hill that produced both *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and *The Great Waldo Pepper* (1975). For this second project, Goldman describes the beginnings of the project in Hill's love of old aeroplanes that led to discussions

on the set of 'Butch', the gestation of the project and the writing of it by Goldman and Hill (Goldman 1983: 225–31) who both received credit. For the novelist John Irving, his collaboration with director Lasse Hallstrom and producer Richard Gladstein on the screen adaptation of Irving's novel, *The Cider House Rules* (1999), meant equal control and a fulfilling creative experience. In fact, he expresses real enjoyment of this secondary and collaborative career as a screenwriter, in contrast to the solitary work of fiction writing (in Engel 2002: 84–86). These types of elite stories reflect the creative 'sparks' of collaborative screenwriting recounted by the writers in Chapter 3.

But such experiences as they are deployed for pedagogical value in manuals are also tempered by a number of individual narratives of 'development hell', of routine firings and re-hirings, of personal projects worked on for years and then brutal treatment by studios or producers. The currency of the horror story reappears here as 'battle scars' are used to orient readers to the 'tough realities' that all writers must expect. Katz uses Ron Bass's description of the 'ordeal' of his involvement on *Rain Man* (1988), a project Bass had been working on with Steven Spielberg and Dustin Hoffman. Bass abruptly discovered that Spielberg had walked away from the project, to be replaced by Sydney Pollack, and Bass describes his realization that he was 'toast'. Bass then received a call from the producer, Mike Ovitz, who told Bass: 'Well yeah, he's [Pollack] gonna fire you. But he wants to know if you'll come down to Universal and meet with him for a day so he can pick your brain'. Bass then reflects on this, 'I know that sounds brutal and cruel but I got it and totally appreciated it' (Engel 2002: 55). Bass was then rehired when Pollack walked away from the project and was replaced with a new director and, for Bass, the lesson of this experience is to always walk away graciously from a project rather than bitterly so as to keep the doors open for future work. Bass's elite status effortlessly reinforces this advice and the assumption is that success comes from employing a 'gracious' and acquiescent working subjectivity. And this resonates with the self-responsibilities of the writers in Chapter 3, especially those who had dealt with similar horror stories: 'get over it', 'no one's holding a gun to my head', 'always say yes' and so on.

This kind of elite testimony highlights the vagaries of the industry and the effects this may have on individual screenwriters while also suggesting that writers have to 'play the game' in order to maintain a reputation as a docile, 'friendly' writer. Thus, the predominant solution via interview manuals is to ride with it, to be cheery in the face of cruelty (as Bass is), and to grow a thick skin. Other screenwriters describe similarly brutal treatment. Holden-Jones illustrates this in few words, 'They massacre your work' (in Iglesias 2001: 214), and Robin Swicord (*Little Women* 1994) describes a particular experience of hers in similarly emotive language: 'I felt I was watching my child being dismembered' (ibid.: 203). Iglesias' collection (*101 Habits of Highly Successful Screenwriters*) discusses 'handling rejection' as a habit a writer must overcome. Akiva Goldsman is quoted in this section: 'I used to handle rejection poorly and get depressed. I'd climb on a bed under a blanket and go through a fugue of self-pity that generally would last a couple of days. Now, I wait' (Iglesias 2001:

200). These feelings of depression and rejection are frequently repeated and most writers interviewed in manuals argue that it is a key part of the profession that one slowly becomes accustomed to. Surviving the routine slings and arrows of the industry comes to resemble a rite of passage, a form of industrial currency, a necessarily torturous path that will eventually, in the case of these elites, lead to success in all its forms.

Marc Norman, author of one the few recent histories of screenwriting (see Chapter 1) describes a more direct reaction to the vagaries of the industry, one which neatly summarizes the struggles for autonomy of the 'professional creative' screenwriter, and again embodies the heroics of this profession, the myth of the writer as tortured and alone:

> I'll tell you one thing I've noticed and it's absolutely true for me. My best writing has been on the scripts I wrote as suicide notes to the industry – sort of 'Fuck you guys, I'm outta here. This is the last script you'll ever get from me. I'm tired of this. I'm going to put everything I know into this one and if you don't buy it, See Ya!' I've reached that point I'd say, five, six, maybe seven times, I've been so frustrated and pissed off, so self-blaming, so disgusted with what I've gotten myself into and the shame of what I had to do for a buck.
>
> (in Engel 2002: 158)

While, on the one hand, the interview manuals may then offer more nuanced and 'realistic' portraits of the ups and downs of the work than traditional 'guru' driven how-to texts, they persist in foregrounding particular pedagogical and disciplinary techniques for screenwriting selves that promote a conservative and utterly intelligible conception of individual screenwriting labor – structure, discipline and entrepreneurialism and enforced, industrial precarity. These types of manuals are *also* self-consciously ambiguous and precarious, offering stories that swing wildly between empowerment and degradation, creativity and craft, art and commerce. They offer 'practical' mechanisms for making a living that can be utilized within an individual career trajectory, and these consistently link up to the workings of the industry. Experienced, 'successful' writers instruct newcomers to write with 'the pitch' in mind and to learn to pitch effectively, to network with other creatives, to join a guild or union and thus ensure some security, to find and secure an agent and maintain a good working relationship with them, to be confident and know when to 'fight for their corner' as Writer F would put it. In short, these texts use elite voices, those few who have 'made it', to frame and teach screenwriting work as a constant struggle but one that can potentially offer unlimited rewards.

Precarious screenwriting manuals

How-to manuals are not only bewildering in their conceptions of screenwriting labor but are also precarious pedagogical and professional tools in their own

right. As the previous section illustrated and as was clear during the ethnographic fieldwork undertaken for this study, screenwriters decry the hegemony of manuals and repudiate them *as well as* acknowledging their centrality to the profession. Elite voices in manuals, especially in first-tier interview texts, often directly reject the how-to genre as a source of inspiration or aid in learning the craft of screenwriting. Iglesias argues in his own how-to text that how-to-be-a-screenwriter books and seminars lead to 'formulaic spec scripts flooding an industry that abhors formula (at least when it comes to buying spec scripts)' (2001: 28). Writers echo this sentiment, often pitting their natural creative instincts against the formulaic models that seminars and books peddle:

> All those 'How to play the Hollywood Game' seminars that teach you how to sell a script in 30 days, or how to get past the reader, contribute largely to this 99 percent of crap. With a few exceptions, the most successful films are the ones that break the mould.
>
> (de Souza quoted in Iglesias 2001: 127)

Writer C offers another perspective on the precarious position of the how-to manual – as both a wall to bounce ideas off and the 'worst thing you could possibly do':

> In general I think the vast majority of books are kind of useful for rewriting … so if you're in the second or third or fourth or even fifth draft or something and you're having some issues, you're looking for a wall to bounce ideas off, reading a Linda Seger or … I don't know, who else, a Robert McKee … but, if you're writing original material, or even a first draft of an adaptation, I think they are the worst thing you could possibly do, you know, I really believe that …

Other writers interviewed during this study reiterated the ambiguous position of these texts in their working lives. They were described as 'weird' and lamented for fostering 'normativization' in the British and Hollywood screen production industries. But they were also regularly referred to as 'helpful' and 'useful' if used selectively and with the benefit of industry experience. Writers and pedagogues said of them, 'I blow hot and cold on using the books' (Writer C again) and 'I've stopped looking at them' (Writer B) and, crucially, some of those same writers and teachers of the profession were *themselves* writing how-to manuals and/or running regular how-to screenwriting seminars.[12]

The message(s) offered in the how-to genre are that 'true' writers will never need a book to help them dream up their career, that the labor is instinctual and requires innate, individual talent and that learning or teaching creative screenwriting is oxymoronic. Yet the primary function of the how-to genre within mainstream screen production industries is to teach and advise through experience, to establish and maintain the boundaries and norms of the profession. And an ancillary, but no less important, set of professional roles the

manuals play are as income generators, as securitizing and legitimating mechanisms. How-to discourse enables screenwriters to additionally position themselves as published authors, increasing their income and professional status, reducing their precarity and insecurity and passing on their knowledge and experience to others. A how-to career can, at times, far eclipse a screenwriting career, as the guru status of Syd Field or Robert McKee illustrates. The development of a how-to career path within or alongside the broader professional identity of 'screenwriter' is a clear-eyed and clever strategy within an industry in which, as Christopherson notes, 'the rewards of working in media entertainment are more elusive than ever' (2008: 85).

The intended audience for the majority of these texts skews towards the novice as opposed to the experienced writer (see Maras 2009), assuming little previous knowledge on the part of the reader and offering basic, practical career advice. More worrying for many writers and pedagogues in both the US and UK industries is that these texts are now routinely read and used by gatekeepers within mainstream screen production industries, those who are also looking for easily graspable tools that will orient them to industry standards and expectations. Here the manuals can again be viewed as texts that variably and, sometimes, problematically foster inter-, intra- and extra-group relations as Caldwell (2008) calls them. Not only do they speak to screenwriters as ideal, enterprising workers and recruit new aspirants via the 'common sense' rules of the profession or the testimonies of elite gurus, but they speak to the cultural intermediaries who consult and work with writers, those who make decisions on the funding and commissioning of particular projects, those who are also comforted by sure-fire formulae and structural models, and those who may perpetuate conservatism and industrial stagnation (see Parker 2009 and the Conclusion).

Conclusion

How-to screenwriting manuals work within a self-help tradition that offers an ideal model for the screenwriting worker, a tradition that purports to help writers navigate the constant and bewildering terrain that, as Chapter 3 also illustrated, requires carefully calibrated individual and collaborative working practices. The seamless industrial setting evoked by the genre may represent aspects of the real-world conditions in which writers must function, potentially fostering a further realm of community and solidarity for screenwriters, offering canny advice from those who have really 'made it'. Screenwriting manuals are vehicles for what Caldwell terms 'industrial reflexivity' and, as he emphasizes, this reflexivity 'emerges as part of both corporate macrostrategies and human microstrategies' (2008: 34). The manuals display a variety of forms of creative agency and critical competence within individual career paths and theirs is certainly not a uniform and univocal address. This particular aspect of the analysis of screenwriting work provides many examples for those microstrategies: the repudiation of particular texts (even within some of these texts) or the genre as

a whole, the careful and selective use of the gurus and tools, or the use of the genre as a whole for income generation, for screenwriting education, for everyday practice.

However, the discourses within the texts (and now, the discourses that circulate across a plethora of how-to platforms and sites), severely delimit the possibilities for professional agency, creative collaboration and criticality beyond the individual career biography. How-to manuals foreground and facilitate the persistent isolation of their readers precisely because they speak to writers as necessarily precarious, self-responsible, enterprising and supplicative. Screenwriting manuals feature prominently within those individual biographies – of the aspirant, the screenwriting teacher, the screenwriter, the commissioner – and they continue to serve as conduits for corporate macrostrategies in the new cultural economy. Those macrostrategies are *known* and have been outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. As Christopherson (2008) indicates, they are currently characterized by increasing instability, bifurcation, competition and exclusion. Screenwriting manuals, as a foundational and heterogeneous site for discourses of screenwriting labor, assume that the industry is creative, egalitarian and meritocratic, open to all who have bought and read the books and emulate the formulae. But this is quite far from the truth. The next and final chapter, then, critiques these assumptions and, by extension, the uncritical forms of creative labor encouraged and demanded by screenwriting manuals. It returns to some deeply problematic socioeconomic and subjective themes that are entirely absent from the how-to genre: inequalities and exclusions in screenwriting work. It asks simply: who's in and who's out in the work-worlds of screenwriting?

Notes

1 This text in fact went through three editions in quick succession (1912, 1913, 1916) and, as Maras notes, using Azlant, they form 'a significant archive, representing a distillation and ongoing revision of public instruction (1980: 211)' (Maras 2009: 148) and focused on correct format and notions of 'plotting'.
2 An instructor in 'Photoplay Composition' at Columbia University, Patterson produced two titles in the 1920s, *Cinema Craftsmanship: A Book for Photoplaywrights* (1921) and *Scenario and Screen* (1928) and she 'takes up the task of formalizing the idea of 'writing for the screen' as a particular craft activity, along with the notion of being trained for this activity (see Maras 2009: 151).
3 Space does not permit a full discussion of these new platforms but note that many key 'gurus' now have their own subscriber-based how-to websites or apps. For some more discussion of this and concluding comments on new technologies and screenwriting work, see the Conclusion.
4 Couldry and Littler (2011) are examining the work narratives enacted in *The Apprentice* in their study.
5 From the initial sample of 32, two 'tiers' were categorized. A first tier included ten 'guru' titles and three interview-based texts. The second tier included a range of less popular titles, chosen to represent identifiable sub-genres such as entrepreneurial/selling titles and 'alternative' model titles and also to diversify the overall sample. Critical discourse analysis was undertaken primarily on the key 'guru' texts that were

the most widely cited by screenwriters, screenwriting teachers and script consultancies and had multiple editions and highest sales and readership figures where these were available.

6 When quoting from interview-based manuals and the accounts of elite writers within them, one indicative screenwriting credit is provided for the first reference to each writer.

7 These techniques have also been identified in the analysis of other genres of management and creativity literature, such as the work of Chiapello and Fairclough (2002) and Prichard (2002) and these interventions are drawn on further below.

8 This is exclusionary in terms of gender, ethnicity and nationality; for some more discussion, see Chapter 5. One interesting illumination of this conflict is the tepid reception Robert McKee has had in China, in which these kinds of structural and individual-protagonist narratives are certainly not assumed to be universal and timeless. See Danlin (2012).

9 Millard (2006) refers to this almost universal primacy as the 'gospel of story' and Maras (2009: 174–78) also discusses this.

10 Note that Vogler's 'Hero's Journey' is one of the most openly exclusionary paradigms for screenwriting labour, although not often acknowledged as such. It is exclusive in terms of gender but also in its assumption of an individual protagonist at the centre of a narrative arc. See Jacey (2010) for a feminist reworking of this as the 'Heroine's Journey'.

11 See the work of Millard (2006) who discusses 'central conflict theory' and its limitations.

12 Note again that early manual writers such as Frances Taylor Patterson were also pedagogues. See Polan (2007) for a historical discussion of early screenwriting teachers and manual writers in the USA including Patterson.

5 Screenwriting work
Who's in and who's out?

This chapter analyzes the contemporary socio-economy of the screenwriting labor force in which the spectres of inequality and lack of diversity haunt the profession and have done so since its earliest days. Recent reports from both the UK (British Film Institute 2012) and USA (Writers Guild of America West 2013a) indicate that the majority of screenplays for both film and television continue to be written by a very small group of, mainly older, white men and, in some cases, diversity is in fact declining, with the proportion of women and ethnic minorities participating in screenwriting work having decreased in both industries between 2010 and 2012. This final chapter asks bluntly, who's in and who's out when it comes to screenwriting work? If screenwriting work can offer important insights into how industrial creativity and craft is experienced, practiced and standardized, how are those experiences and practices affected, possibly deeply compromised, by the fact that so few have access to the industry and work?

Chapter 1 outlined various scenes and players from the early part of Hollywood's historical record. It also introduced a number of rhetorical devices that animate the persona of the screenwriter and the language used to construct her/his work. Those devices resonate in the domain(s) of contemporary screenwriting work; screenwriting as potentially flexible but also as degraded and deskilled; screenwriting as standardized and craft-oriented, in contrast to other forms of writing; screenwriting as lucrative but as also compromised and thus impure; as commercially but not artistically legitimate. All of these devices conjure up an anxious, tortured and *gendered* screenwriter-as-myth, making this form of work normative and intelligible to producers, audiences and writers themselves. In histories, in the screenwriting manuals outlined in the previous chapter, in media interviews with screenwriters, in films and television programs, screenwriters are assumed to be, and are routinely represented as male, white, heterosexual, well educated, at least comfortable if not wealthy and able-bodied. This chapter analyzes the homogeneous and exclusionary nature of screenwriting work. The first part of the chapter maps the socio-economy, the 'ins' and 'outs' of screenwriting work, using recent figures from a range of industries and places. In the second part of the chapter the structural features of inequality in screenwriting work are linked up to subjective, discursive accounts of screenwriting. Looking again at the ways in which screenwriting is talked

about, understood and delimited, it is possible to see how screenwriting is routinely and implicitly constructed as the preserve of a very few.

Mapping ins and outs for screenwriters

We begin with a process of mapping, considering who is most likely to have access to the screenwriting profession in all the forms this book has so far considered: screenwriting itself, screenwriting education and the how-to industry. This means first assessing the 'outs', those who are most likely to be excluded from the profession and from the screen production industries more generally, those who struggle to make the transition from screenwriting training into the industry itself, and those who have difficulty maintaining a career in these industries over time. This first section draws on a range of contemporary statistics and data samples that track the absence of women, ethnic minorities and those from a diverse range of class and socio-economic backgrounds.[1] An overall concern of this chapter is how and why these indices of inequality are so immune to change, especially considering the historical context outlined in Chapter 1 in which screenwriting was initially an industry accessible, albeit not equally, by both men and women.[2]

Questions about workforce diversity in particular places or industries, and the inequalities therein, are now periodically raised in relation to sectors of the creative industries. For example, recent figures that have quantified the lack of gender diversity in the British media have revealed persistent inequalities, from the lack of women represented on BBC Radio 4's flagship *Today* program in 2011 and 2012, to the stark differences in the numbers of male and female bylines in the British press, to the large numbers of male guests as opposed to the miniscule numbers of female guests on British panel shows (see *Guardian* 2012). Whilst questions might be raised, the issues remain 'poorly understood' according to Ball and Bell: 'The issue of women's role in the production of film and television is poorly understood and subjected to critical silence which is only occasionally interrupted by bouts of liberal handwringing when the Palme d'Or list is announced' (Ball and Bell 2013: 547). The kinds of questions that are often explicit in coverage of this kind are: why are there, for example, so few women/ethnic minorities/people from working-class backgrounds working in the media or screen production and in key creative roles? Why do so few women write film and television, direct film and television and produce film and television? Why are these industries so white and so privileged? Why are these supposedly egalitarian, open, creative professions so homogenous and exclusive? And why are so few diverse voices heard?

Rosalind Gill (2002) has offered an important critical account of the perception of the cultural and creative industries as 'cool, creative and egalitarian'. Discourses of egalitarianism are a key feature of the postfeminist and neoliberal climate in which Anglophone media is produced, or are implied in statements from screenwriting gurus and manuals such as 'everyone is a writer' (Field, 1994). With a few exceptions (such as Bielby and Bielby 1996, Bielby

2009) screenwriting research has not been concerned with inequalities in screenwriting work, thus it is very important to collect and map contemporary data from a range of industries and places that accurately indicate levels of inequality and the persistent lack of change within this data. In the UK industry, women represented 19 percent of writers and 15 percent of directors for British films in 2011 (British Film Institute 2012). Earlier reports commissioned by the UK Film Council have highlighted the lack of women writing for British film and television and the need for continued tracking and qualitative assessment of these significant gaps (2006, 2007). A study titled 'Who writes British films' and surveying a sample of 60 films released in the UK in 2004 and 2005, for example, found that the vast majority of the writers on those films were 'white (98%), male (82.5%), over the age of 46 (66%) and earned relatively high incomes' (UK Film Council 2007: 7). The 2006 study specifically focused on the lack of women screenwriters in the UK and found that women screenwriters were 'credited on less than 15 per cent of UK films made between 1999 and 2003'.

These stark inequalities are also reflected in the most recent full Writers Guild of America West (hereafter WGAW) *Writers Reports* (2011a, 2013a) that emphasize the lack of change in the diversity of Hollywood-based screenwriters in the years 2007–9. 'Women writers remain stuck at 28 percent of television employment while their share of film employment actually declined a percentage point to 17 percent' (WGAW 2011a: 1). In 2009, ethnic minorities were underrepresented by a factor of about seven to one among employed film writers, which is the 'smallest minority share of film employment in ten years' (ibid.: 5). More recent statistics from the WGAW, focused on television writing, signal a very slow increase in the proportion of women television writers, indicating that between 1999–2000 and 2011–12 women's share of this writing work increased by 5 percentage points, from 25 percent to 30.5 percent (2013a: 2). In this time period, minority writers doubled their share (from 7.5 percent to 15.6 percent), however, this is still severe under-representation when considering the overall minority share of the US population (reported by the WGAW as 36.3 percent in 2010). Martha Lauzen's 'Celluloid ceiling' reports are also a crucial source of annual data that analyze employment figures for the top 250 domestic (US) grossing films. Her most recent report repeats a similar and worrying set of figures:

> Women comprised 18% of all directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers, and editors working on the top 250 domestic grossing films of 2012. This percentage represents no change from 2011 and an increase of 1 percentage point from 1998.
>
> (Lauzen 2012a: 1)

In primetime US television, that total percentage is 26 percent (see Lauzen 2012b: 1). These kinds of statistical patterns are also consistent (with small deviations) in other Anglophone screen markets:

- In Canada, there are twice as many male screenwriters as female and only 4.1% of writers were reported to be from a visible minority (Coutanche and Davis 2013).
- In Australia, women represented 24 percent of film writers between 2006 and 2011 (Screen Australia 2013).
- In New Zealand, 12.5 percent of films were written and directed by women over the last ten years as opposed to 72 percent by men.[3] (see Davis 2012b)

In summary, screenwriters are very likely to be older, overwhelmingly white and male. Overall, this workforce is also very well educated (as Coutanche and Davis [2013] illustrate in the case of Canadian writers), able-bodied (only 6 percent of workers in UK film industry between 2004–10 were disabled; British Film Institute 2012) and usually lives in metropolitan areas and large cities such as Los Angeles, London and Toronto.

A disturbing feature of this mapping process is the statistical evidence that indicates the *lack of change* in terms of diversity and, in fact, the possible worsening of some of these inequalities in contemporary screenwriting and production industries. The 2009 Skillset employment census of the creative media industries in the UK provided workforce statistics that showed that nearly 5,000 women had lost their jobs since the recession, compared to just 650 men (Skillset 2009) and this is not new. Mahar writes that in early Hollywood, one factor that contributed to the loss of many independent women filmmakers, writers and theatre owners in the early 1920s was the recession in 1921 that 'destroyed many small/precariously financed independent film companies, many operated/owned by female director/producers' (Mahar 2001: 103). The most recent Skillset census figures indicated that the number of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in the workforce also decreased, representing 5.4 percent of the total workforce in 2012 compared to 6.7 percent in 2009, although the figures for women's representation improved somewhat, representing 36 percent of the total cultural industries workforce compared to 27 percent in 2009 (Skillset 2012).

Inequalities on-screen and off

However, this is not only about inequalities in off-screen production spaces and work-worlds. Screenwriters are directly involved in representational processes, in producing views on and of the world, images and narratives for others to consume. And so another important facet of this mapping process is a consideration of how these exclusions may be translating onto Anglophone screens. Considering the statistical data presented so far, it is no surprise that many data sets also indicate a range of disturbing and disturbingly consistent on-screen inequalities. For example, Martha Lauzen also tracks on-screen gender representations and in her 2012 report, 'It's a man's (celluloid) world', she writes:

> In 2011, females remained dramatically under-represented as characters in film when compared with their representation in the U.S. population. Last year, females accounted for 33% of all characters in the top 100 domestic grossing films. This represents an increase of 5 percentage points since 2002 when females comprised 28% of characters. While the percentage of female characters has increased over the last decade, the percentage of female protagonists has declined. In 2002, female characters accounted for 16% of protagonists. In 2011, females comprised only 11% of protagonists.
>
> (Lauzen 2012c: 1)

The Geena Davis Institute for Gender and Media commissioned research into screen representations of gender roles and occupations with similar results, including that females are not as prevalent as males in both film and television and, across genres, that women continue to be stereotyped in domestic and heterosexual roles for example, and that women continue to be disproportionately sexualized in popular and family entertainment (Smith, Choeiti, Prescott and Pieper 2013).[4] Even more interestingly, this research found that women are much less likely than men to be shown working on-screen (only 20.3 percent in family films and 34.4 percent in prime-time television) and in inverse proportion to their representation in the US labor force as a whole, reported here as 47 percent (Smith, Choeiti, Prescott and Pieper 2013). Again, these figures have been replicated in studies conducted in other parts of the world, in New Zealand for example (see National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women 2012).

The researchers commissioned by the Geena Davis Institute write that males outnumber females three to one in family films and go on to highlight the fact that this ratio 'is the same as it was in 1946' (Smith, Choeiti, Prescott and Pieper 2013), another indication of the entrenchment of inequalities both on- and off-screen. 'The Black List 3.0', an online forum for scriptwriting, script sharing and script analysis, recently aggregated data on US spec script sales and found that the proportion of female speculative (spec) script sales is also decreasing. It was 14 percent between 1991 and 2000, 13 percent between 2001 and 2010 and only 9 percent in 2011 and 2012 (see Orozco 2013).

Clearly this kind of a mapping process has some methodological and practical flaws. There are difficulties in drawing direct causal links between the lack of women writers for example, and the lack of female protagonists in prime-time television or in top-grossing films. But plenty of tacit industrial knowledge circulates that explains away or justifies these continued inequalities, making explicit links between professional practices on-screen and off. For example, the repetition of the 'what audiences want' argument, in which those audiences are regularly assumed to be adolescent boys; or routine references to the perceived differences between the way men and women tell stories; or via the assumption that films written by men are simply more polished and perform better at the box office. Lucy Hay, a London-based writer and how-to author, nicely

skewers some of the sexism she has encountered in the industry in a blog post for the London Screenwriters' Festival, listing the sexist but 'common sense' comments she has encountered in her writing career: 'Women don't write good [genre]', 'Women write too much about childbirth or losing your virginity', 'Women aren't funny', 'Men don't watch films with female protagonists' and 'Men make the most of their opportunities' (Hay 2013).

But clearly these kinds of statements, assumed to be 'natural law' as Caldwell puts it (2008: 18), are actually obfuscatory, just as the 'common sense' assumptions about the universality of story structure within screenwriting manuals also are. Most of these explanations are patently unsupportable and mask another set of industrial truths, about the unstable and exclusionary nature of the industry (see Christopherson 2008). The UK Film Council's 2006 scoping study on the lack of British women screenwriters notes for example:

> Overall cinema audiences are roughly equally balanced between men and women, and women aged 35 plus – not young men – make up the biggest single part of UK cinema audiences at 18 per cent.

and:

> The box office return for British films with a female screenwriter is $1.25 per £1 budget, compared with $1.16 for films with all-male writers. Women write a variety of genres, and an equal percentage of films by men and women (just over 30 per cent) are comedies, the most financially successful genre at the UK box office.
>
> (UK Film Council 2006: ix)

Filmmakers and screenwriters themselves often provide more nuanced, qualitative accounts of why gender inequalities are still prevalent in these industries. For example, a Sundance Institute report published in 2013, and drawing on interviews with 51 independent filmmakers, found evidence for a number of perceived barriers to full and equal participation including gendered financial barriers stemming from three interrelated issues: (a) independent narrative film relies on a funding structure that is primarily operated by males; (b) female-helmed projects are perceived to lack commercial viability; and (c) women are viewed as less confident when they ask for film financing. Other barriers to access cited in this report include the preponderance of male-dominated filmmaking networks (39.2 percent), stereotyping on filmmaking sets (15.7 percent), issues around work and family balance (19.6 percent) and exclusionary hiring decisions (13.7 percent) (Smith, Choeiti and Pieper 2013: 11). These kinds of explanations from filmmakers themselves hint at some deeper and more complex issues in relation to gender relations and representation in mainstream screen production, issues that are historical as well as urgently contemporary.

Masculine, fraternalist and homophilic

Crucially for an analysis of screenwriting labor, it is quite clear that these inequalities are structural and historical in nature, although they may also be hidden or unacknowledged. Bielby examines the entrenched nature of gender inequalities in relation to the sociology of Hollywood and the organization of its labor markets (for film and television), and, relating back to the analysis of screen production labor markets in Chapters 1 and 2, discusses the ways in which this organization *builds* stereotyping and discrimination into everyday working practices. She highlights the short-termism of contemporary screenwriting work practices, the 'brokerage' system in which reputation and networks are key to sustainable career success and, as she puts it:

> Stereotypes make perfect business sense to Hollywood executives, who self-consciously attempt to mirror and trade on cultural idioms about age, race, and gender. Cultural stereotypes are embodied in the industry's product, figure prominently in its marketing strategies, and therefore become rules of thumb for making decisions about writers and other creative professionals.
>
> (Bielby 2009: 248–49)

Mahar's analysis of early Hollywood links the increased industrial specialization and efficiency outlined in Chapter 1 to sex-typing and increased discrimination against women filmmakers (2001: 103). Indeed, the findings from the Sundance Institute, above, are directly in line with an explanation Mahar offers in her historic analysis of gender exclusion in Hollywood: 'Typically a female star established a company in tandem with the male director/producer with whom she had been working. It seems likely that women needed male partners to gain access to all the necessary segments of the industry' (ibid.: 95). One of Mahar's indicative examples is the studio owner Alice Guy Blaché who was not allowed to attend her own distributors' meetings. Central to Mahar's argument, in fact, is that as the industry secured 'financial legitimacy' between 1915 and 1928 'a blending of professionalization and fraternalism developed here, *defining the filmmaking profession and therefore the tools, as male*' (my emphasis). Mahar writes: 'Seemingly gender neutral, the "new" American film industry was, in fact, born masculine' (2001: 79) and in advertising and early film technology development, men were depicted as camera operators, owners and exhibitors. This is not unlike the unquestioning use of masculine pronouns in screenwriting manuals, or blanket references to the 'Hero's Journey', even alongside the voices of both female and male screenwriters, that subtly but effectively circumscribe screenwriting as a masculine profession, requiring masculine creative traits.[5] What Mahar deftly illustrates is that the screen production industries, whilst initially quite illustrative of the utopian vision of a creative industry as 'cool, creative and egalitarian', quickly became masculine, fraternalist and homophilic in orientation. These masculine creative bonds were

strengthened by sex-typing filmmaking tools as masculine, as well as relying on filmmaking spaces such men-only trade associations, clubhouses or bars. Sutherland's account of gender inequalities in the BBC's Light Entertainment group in the 1970s notes that the organization's bar was the 'hub of creativity' as a male producer called it (2013: 654). Bielby's work also reinforces this: 'In the clubby male-dominated world of executives, male writers are insiders. Pro-male bias in the industry generates a pattern of advantage for men whereby women fall further behind their male counterparts during the course of a career' (2009: 249–50).

Importantly for a broader reading of screenwriting as a form of creative labor, these accounts of screen production as masculine and fraternalist echo findings from contemporary studies of gendered relations in other creative professions, from advertising to new media work. Nixon and Nixon and Crewe's studies of advertising illustrate the homosocial and 'laddish' working cultures of creative advertising departments, oriented around 'hedonistic' at-work and after-work rituals – rituals that are hostile to female participation, contributing to the sector's gender segregation (Nixon 2003; Nixon and Crewe 2004). Gill's research on new media work indicates that as well as traditional patterns of gender inequality, new forms of inequality and sexism exist, 'connected – paradoxically – to many of the features of the work that are valued – informality, autonomy, flexibility and so on' (2002: 71), features associated with the freelance, project-based nature of cultural work. This complex, convoluted mix of very old and much newer forms of sexism and inequality is visible (although not fully explored) in Caldwell's (2008) work in Los Angeles and what he terms 'gendered production spaces' such as writers' rooms and trade imagery of 'worker masochism', which sees film production tools masculinized and processes of networking often referred to in sexualized terms. Henderson's (2001) 'insider' discussion of race and gender in television writers' rooms is also instructive here. In particular, she highlights what she terms the perceived 'sanctity' or 'creative necessity' of 'trash talking' and 'off-colour' sexist and racist jokes, noting that this argument around creative necessity was upheld in a sexual discrimination case brought against Warner Brothers Television (WBTV) in 2006 by a female ethnic minority writer on the sitcom *Friends* (Henderson 2001: 150). In this case, the California Supreme Court ruled in favour of WBTV and for Henderson (herself a writer/producer) this is an example of both cultural homogenization and othering within a screenwriting space. As she puts it, 'the more race, gender, and class are used to other writers, the less comfortable these writers are with expressing creative and cultural difference' (ibid.: 152).

Whilst there is not the space to offer a full analysis, it is also important to note that screenwriting labor, as it is constructed in interviews, manuals and public and private accounts of the work, is also exclusionary via its heteronormativity. Chapter 1 has already noted the ways in which increasingly masculine production spaces were shored up by ensuring that women screenwriters were acknowledged, but framed as reassuringly domestic, 'dainty' and sexually appealing (see Mahar 2001). It is striking, yet not often critically interrogated,

that the screenwriter is so often framed as not only white and male but as sexualized, relying on sexual language to speak about the work in a variety of ways. Indicative examples range from Frank Cottrell Boyce's recent reference to production executives as 'sympathy skanks' (Yorke 2013) to the hang-dog commentary of Charlie Kaufman in his introduction to *Being John Malkovich*:

> Listen, I'm just an insignificant guy who wants to be significant. I want to be loved and admired. I want women to think I'm sexy. Even men. That'd be fine, too. I want everyone to think I'm brilliant.
>
> (Kaufman 2000).

Interestingly, historian Wendy Holliday also highlights early Hollywood's heteronormative milieu in which heterosexual relationships, especially for women screenwriters, were emphasized and often compulsory, and homosexual relationships were invisible or never acknowledged (here she cites the early writer-director Dorothy Arzner). In what Holliday calls the 'ultimate conflation of modern heterosociability and heterosexuality' a number of early women screenwriters she identifies 'married their co-workers' (1995: 240) and, in fact, many histories and modern accounts of women screenwriters make veiled or open references to this. In one more recent and problematic example, McCreadie refers to writers such as Melissa Mathison and Naomi Foner as 'marrying in' or 'hooked up' with prominent male directors (2006: 23, 36).

This kind of account works doubly to preserve a heteronormative and masculine framing for screenwriting work *and* to trivialize the equal and important roles that women have played and continue to play as screenwriters and filmmakers. These kinds of frames for women screenwriters also distance them from those prevailing notions of individual 'divine spark' creativity, from the masculine self-centeredness often constructed as required for creative work (see Taylor 2011 and for more on selfishness and egotism, see below). Other studies of creative work have provided similar accounts of cultural production spaces as homosocial, heteronormative and, sometimes, sexist and racist. These findings are in stark contrast to those theoretical accounts of new post-Fordist workplaces outlined in Chapter 2, which suggested that increased flexibility at work would lead to the 'detraditionalization' of social relations, to the breakdown of traditional gender relations at work and to the 'feminization' of production and cultural production.

Theorizing inequality and screenwriting work: retraditionalization and feminization

To return to Chapter 2's theoretical terrain for a moment, we can examine the ways in which work in the 'new cultural economy' continues to be marked by very traditional gender norms and boundaries, even though the language of this economy is so concerned with freedom, flexibility and even 'feminization'. Adkins offers a critical theoretical account of the profound 'exclusion of women

from these reflexivized occupations' (1999: 126). Hers is a convincing argument against the notion of the detraditionalization of social relations (from writers such as Lash and Urry 1987 and Beck 1992) within which it might seem that new kinds of flexible, multivalent jobs benefit women and enable them to more fully participate in labor markets of various kinds. As Adkins argues, women's domestic and unpaid work still enables men to embrace opportunities in reflexive modernity (opportunities that may also be more demanding in terms of flexibility and emotional investment) and women are still more likely to be 'juggling' traditional caring roles, roles that are very challenging in terms of time, energy and emotional labor. More than this, Adkins argues that familial relations are actually integral to cultural work: women generally undertake administrative, caring and support jobs rather than high-tech/creative jobs (she looks at husband-wife teams in tourism/services, an interesting corollary to husband-wife screenwriting partnerships as Holliday [1995] discusses at length). Male/female roles are, Adkins argues, still separated out in order to maintain traditional, gendered structures of power. As Allen (2013: 234) puts it, 'aspects of cultural work that are seen to liberate women from previous constraints on labor market participation, provide the very means by which gender inequality is reproduced'. Banks and Milestone use Adkins' work in their analysis of new media workers to illustrate that although women in this sector experience a range of pleasures and benefits, new media is also rife with 'markedly regressive traditional social structures' and is exemplary of enduring features of gender discrimination (2011: 73). They go on to write that, in their study, '[b]y and large women were only seen as being able to counterbalance male innovation and creativity by taking on supporting roles that befitted their "natural" gender attributes' (ibid.: 81).

Discussing these concepts in relation to recent trends in British television production and reception, Vicki Ball (2012) has analyzed accounts of the 'feminization' of British television and how this might be critically linked to the arguments focused on gender relations and retraditionalization. As Ball writes, television has often been viewed as a more 'feminine' medium than film, one associated with particular gendered traits and positions such as domesticity and the private sphere, feminine programing such as soap operas and the development of female audiences. She illustrates that in the later 1990s, both in academia and popular reportage, a feminization of British television was widely cited. The evidence for this was variously tied to new kinds of programing focused on 'female experience', strong female protagonists and new kinds of 'feminine' lifestyle options (reflected in reality television genres for example). But Ball refutes the notion that there has been a feminization or 'female takeover' of British television production, although more women are now in production positions. As she points out, men still dominate the 'top jobs' in British broadcasting. As well as this, men and women continue to work in gender segregated production roles – many more women work in costume, wardrobe and makeup for example and men are much more likely to be production company owners and executive producers, as the 2012 Skillset employment

census continues to evidence. And the gender pay gap in British television 'shows no sign of diminishing … with women in television earning on average 17% less than men' (Skillset 2012: 251). Ball argues:

> Far from social subjects being de-traditionalized by the "feminized" employment cultures of the broadcasting industries of late modernity, these "new" working conditions re-traditionalize both women and men in relation to the traditional division of labor.
>
> (ibid.: 252).

As Banks and Milestone state, 'the structures of cultural work employment are not conducive to the full participation of women' (2011: 84) and the features of many kinds of cultural production outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 and that writers themselves described in Chapter 3 (freelancing, networking, multivalency, entrepreneurialism, etc.) are often insurmountable barriers to fair and equal access to these industries, sometimes extremely so. And this is not simply a story about gender inequalities. In relation to racial inequalities, Holgate and McKay write:

> In situations of temporary insecure employment, equal opportunities practices *may actually operate so as to deter black and minority ethnic candidates,* from seeking employment in those workplaces where formal recruitment practices operate and may indeed encourage a greater reliance on informal recruitment paths to employment.
>
> (Holgate and McKay 2009: 151; my emphasis)

Workers who are not white and male find it even more difficult to break into, and then to maintain, careers in the screen production industries. But again, these structural features of the industry are often excused via 'myths' or 'commonsense' wisdom about the industry such as 'the pool of diverse writers is limited'. As the Writers Guild of America West (2009) explains in countering this myth, their recent Writers Access Project (WAP) facilitated a huge variety of high-quality script submissions from minority writers, from writers with disabilities, from gay and lesbian writers and from women writers. But the natural and 'universal' tropes of the profession continue to dominate hiring and funding practices, and are peddled in screenwriting manuals. The screen production industries have, from their earliest days, been deeply unequal, exclusionary and gendered. The structural organization of screenwriting labor markets, and the new kinds of laboring practices within them have served to entrench and even deepen these inequalities. This chapter has so far focused on structural 'ins' and 'outs', the ways in which screen production industries do and have always excluded more than they have included. However, to understand the myriad ways in which screenwriting is gendered and exclusive, we need to further examine subjective accounts of screenwriting work, the discourses and performatives that are used to describe and account for the work

in particular (gendered) ways. As Allen (2013: 235) argues in her analysis of creative work and subjectivity, 'as well as the objective, structural disadvantages associated with the bulimic working patterns of cultural work, there exists other more tacit gender exclusions and conflicts operating at the subjective level'. This analysis now turns to a set of gendered subject positions and working practices for screenwriters in order to illustrate that inequalities are not only structural, but are also subjective, and that these are intimately linked.

Subjectivity, performativity, gender

Inequalities determine who is in and who is out; who is able to experience, learn or undertake screenwriting work and who is not; who is able to take up a subject position within particular creative professions and what kinds of subject positions are possible. This section identifies and further examines some of those subject positions – pioneer, egotist, masochist, geek – as well as particular kinds of gendered practices routinely deployed in screenwriting work and screenwriting manuals as Chapters 3 and 4 also illustrated – horror stories, combat/competition and supplication. Screenwriting manuals privilege particular kinds of discursive subjects – formula- and commercially driven, entrepreneurial and individualized – but make little or no reference to structural inequalities in the industry, certainly not to issues of gender and diversity. But these working subjects are also constructed in discourse via gender relations. They are gendered norms and practices and they are performative. Proctor-Thomson provides a useful summary of Judith Butler's conception of performativity and its 'three main tenets':

> (1) That performativity needs to be understood as repeated, iterative discursive practices that are enacted within social relations; (2) that such practices are not simply performed by a subject, or individual, but they also constitute the individual and (3) that such practices are performed within the context of constraining regulatory norms, but these norms are never absolute or fully determining.
>
> (Proctor-Thomson 2013a: 91)

Proctor-Thomson, drawing on Sherry Turkle, goes on to discuss performativity in relation to one masculine subject as it is tied to new media work:

> From this perspective, we might view 'the geek' so vividly depicted by Turkle (1984) as a certain kind of masculine subject which gains power through the simultaneous recitation of some tropes of masculine achievement (harnessing machines, solitary pioneer, pushing the limits of knowledge and power) while, at the same time, rejecting other tropes (physical strength and domination).
>
> (ibid.)

In the same way, the repeated iterations of the screenwriter as male (and as white, as well educated, as heterosexual, etc.), which thread through both the histories and contemporary accounts of screenwriting work, serve to constitute the reality of the screenwriting labor force. Holliday (1995) argues that the identities of early women screenwriters in Hollywood were also performative. She illustrates the strategies that women screenwriters used to frame and construct their own imagery (those largely written out of mainstream histories), the ways in which they too embodied some of the traits that are discussed below. Thus early women screenwriters also took up particular masculine discourses and aesthetics in order to simply be *present* as screenwriters, to survive within the homosocial and heteronormative environment of the time. And arguably, this is still the case. Both male and female screenwriters interviewed in screenwriting manuals, or whose biographies and career trajectories were discussed in Chapter 3, refer to, use and sometimes sanction these kinds of gendered identities. And this illustrates, *not* that all screenwriters are sexist or are cultural dupes who perpetuate gendered norms, but that the broader discursive landscape in which their work is circumscribed and determined is regularly and consistently premised on and shaped by gendered notions of screenwriting and creative work.

Pioneer, egotist, geek

As has been clear throughout this book, the ideal screenwriting subject is constructed as a pioneer, a maverick figure who, whether as an early scenario writer, a studio era writer-for-hire, or a contemporary writer of film or television, is at the margins – of creativity, of commercial screen production, of visibility. Recall the historical accounts of the profession in Chapter 1, which often explicitly reference or emulate a pioneering spirit in implicitly masculine terms. As Mahar (2001: 80–81) puts it in relation to narratives of early Hollywood filmmaking:

> The very early film industry was characterized by scrambling entrepreneurialism and lawlessness, creating a manly culture that was highly romanticized in memoirs and early film histories. It is with a certain winking boastfulness, for example, that cameramen Fred F. Balshofer and Arthur C. Miller recalled themselves and their peers visiting 'speakeasy' camera supply stores in the 1890s.

Holliday's (1995) history of women screenwriters highlights the masculine pioneer as a key archetype in early Hollywood, to which many filmmakers and screenwriters subscribed and sometimes embodied, and to which the trade press played constant homage. For example, film sets were often set up as camps and particular writers and directors, such as Cecil B. de Mille, embodied pioneer aesthetics such as 'cowboy' style dress. Holliday quotes historian Kevin Brownlow who lists a set of careers he attributes to early silent filmmakers: 'oil roughneck, lumberjack, goldminer, railroader and mercenary, all evoked the

image of the Western frontiersman' (1995: 59). Holliday notes that some women screenwriters were attached to this myth as well. Frances Marion, for example, was referred to in *Photoplay* as coming 'from a long line of California pioneers' (ibid.: 62) and she provides numerous examples of women screenwriters who 'adapted masculine attire' in de Mille's pioneering image, wearing jodhpurs, boots and ties on-set (ibid.: 103).

The pioneer or maverick is a subject position visible in studies of other kinds of creative work and in creative identity work more generally. Nixon and Crewe (2004) discuss masculine and gendered working cultures in advertising and note that myths of manhood in this profession were often explicitly linked by their participants to myths of 'Gonzo'-style journalism, another powerful variant of the maverick creative writer figure. Taylor's (2011) narrative-discursive analysis identifies, drawing on Becker, a more general and powerful discursive resource centred on opposition and difference: 'the image of the artist/creative as different from (the mass of) ordinary people (Becker, 1982)'. The historical referent of the pioneering screenwriter serves as a form of confidence, and a type of boosterism for screenwriters who might feel degraded or marginalized in an industry that doesn't always appreciate them. Thus, the pioneering screenwriter ties closely to the egotistic, even masochistic screenwriter, one that was evident in a number of interviews as outlined in Chapter 3 and was often presented as an inevitable and necessary subject position, as allowing one to deftly navigate from one project to the next.

Writer D, who had struggled through a difficult production process through which there had been significant threats to his creative control and autonomy, had nonetheless seen his film produced. This, he admitted, was a channel for some much-needed 'ego-puffery' that then filtered outwards in practical ways, providing him a platform on which he was able to set up new project meetings (with 'big' production companies). Writer E cheerily admitted she had a 'massive ego' and was able to cope with the 'hard graft' of screenwriting, which nicely mirrors the list of grafters and 'roughnecks' of Brownlow's above. Writer G, who was also recovering from a project that had had many development problems, described himself jokingly as 'horribly arrogant'. He went on to suggest that the persona who was attracted to the life of the screenwriter was also necessarily attracted to the masochism of the profession. Caldwell (2008: 11) highlights a variant of 'worker masochism' as it is promoted in Hollywood trade publications and advertising for 'masculinised tools', just as Mahar (2001) identified early advertising for filmmaking equipment as a masculine preserve. And other screenwriters often foreground the vagaries this work can inflict on one's ego. Writer B noted, for example, that the work leads to 'ego stroking or ego denting depending on which way it goes'.

The performative nature of these pioneering, egotistical subjects resonated in the numerous moments in which horror stories were related in interviews with some relish, in which 'big names' were whispered off the record, 'possible' projects with name producers or stars were hinted and 'bad' working practices were framed as badges of honour, as illustrating one's longevity and the

perverse love of difficult work. The figures of the screenwriter egotist or pioneer do perhaps fuel professional confidence and a sense of collective, industrial identity, linking past and present workers. Taylor is again very useful here in contextualizing egotism and masochism as gendered subject positions, and ones tied to the more general notion of individual, Romantic creative genius as inherently masculine and self-oriented:

> I referred earlier to the masculine image of the creative maker (the artist in the garret). It is notable that, as part of this characterization, responsibilities to others, including families, are famously cast aside. … both female and male participants referred to the 'selfishness' of their creative working … The prioritizing of the commitment to the individual maker's own work conflicts with an other-directed-ness that operates not only in conventional caring roles, such as mothering, but also more generally as part of a feminine identity.
>
> (Taylor 2011: 13–14)

The selfish and self-involved screenwriter as geek or nerd also appeared in ethnographic encounters with screenwriters and within their self-perceptions. This gendered image is frequently evoked in portrayals of the screenwriter in film: Charlie Kaufman's double persona of the struggling writer Charlie Kaufman and his more successful twin Donald Kaufman in his film *Adaptation* (2002) or the tortured, studio-era writer-for-hire Barton Fink in the Coen Brothers' film of the same name (*Barton Fink* 1991). Writer B spoke eloquently about the 'nerdy' persona of the screenwriter who haggles over story paradigms, pores over manuals and compares notes on scripts, drafts and films, in an endlessly reflexive process that burrows further into the screenwriter's own psyche. The geek persona is constructed here as a defensive strategy:

> Most screenwriters are geeky about the craft aspects … to the point of fetishizing them because it's something that you can hang onto in this confusing fricking world.

Again, this echoes Mahar's work on the overwhelming masculinization of filmmaking and filmmaking tools (as Caldwell 2008 also pinpoints) and the heteronormative work that the 'geek' subject also does.[6] Proctor-Thomson (2013a: 87) offers a useful corollary in her work on gendered subjects in the digital industries, a domain in which 'nerds' and 'geeks' are prominent and performative as are other related figures that she identifies in public policy documents from this sector: 'social misfits', 'compulsive bums', 'computer anoraks', 'heroic entrepreneurs' and 'garage-hackers'. She goes on to discuss the differing ways in which men and women are connected to these figures:

> Rather than assuming that these policy texts simply provide neutral statements regarding the digital industries and their labor needs, they can be

> seen as part of a broad network of practices which contribute to the formation of certain types of working subject. In these, women are not only distinguished from more negative masculinised notions of 'compulsive bums', 'social misfits' and 'geeks', but also from genius, passionate, heroic, focused and successful workers.
>
> (Proctor-Thomson 2013a: 88)

Performative screenwriting subjects – pioneers, egotists, geeks – illustrate a dynamic oscillation between speaking back – to a perceived collective and mythic history of screenwriting as profession and practice – and speaking forward – to collaborators, to audiences, to financiers, to other screenwriters. Recall from Chapter 1, for example, the depersonalized names of the scribes that populate Powdermaker's (1950: 137–43) account of working in Hollywood in the 1940s. From Mr Acquiesce to Miss Sanguine, Mr Pretentious and Mr Gifted, these titles suggest a range of professional positions for screenwriters. Powdermaker also wrote in 1950: 'Hollywood abounds with clever stories, with witty remarks, with groans about frustrations, and with tirades against the Production Code, or the front office, or a particular producer' (1950: 83). Particular subjective traits and performatives, like the examples used here, are deployed repeatedly to express and share the particular creative and authorial frustrations of screenwriting work. And they are used by contemporary screenwriters, in interviews, in screenwriting manuals and in films themselves. The difficulty here is that gendered norms and the very subtle forms of exclusion and hierarchization this chapter has outlined are implicit in many of these iterative and repeated accounts of screenwriting. Not only this, but they also often link to particular, ideal kinds of screenwriting practice that are *also* gendered, and which are promoted and performed across histories, screenwriting manuals and interviews.

Horror, combat, supplication

We know from writers' own accounts that horror stories serve a productive purpose for writers and have arguably always done so for creative workers. They are a potent form of currency within the screenwriting community and the filmmaking community more generally and other studies of cultural work have also made this point. For example, Banks (2007: 60) notes that 'the rhetoric of enterprise culture places great emphasis on entrepreneurial "war stories" particularly regarding rites of passage and "hard knocks" to be endured while building a business'. Horror stories reflect a need to make sense of these encounters and, more elaborately, to prove one's own endurance and longevity as a writer. They indicate that one has faced the slings and arrows of the business and still stands, with credits to one's name, and this is evident in screenwriting manuals based on accounts from successful and elite writers as much as via interviews with writers working today. Horror stories are also routinely connected to the screenwriter as pioneer – the studio era writer-for-hire or the lone, tortured

maverick facing off against a Mack Sennett or an Irving Thalberg or a 'sympathy skank' as Cottrell Boyce puts it (Yorke 2013). As Mahar notes, early Hollywood films, products of homophilic and fraternalist production relations, themselves produced repeated images of combat that 'suggested a manly culture' (2001: 89). The strategic use and retelling of the horror story also imbricates screenwriting work as implicitly combative, competitive and defensive. Combat metaphors were repeated in interviews conducted for this project as they are in collaborative testimonials in screenwriting manuals. As Script Editor A put it: 'Always be amenable in a face-to-face meeting with a producer, choose your fights carefully'. Writer C stated: 'You've got to fight for your corner' and Writer F nicely summarized the need for effortless combat: 'Fight without seeming to fight too much'. Allen, drawing on Puwar, also found evidence for the gendered use of combat metaphors in young aspiring creative workers' accounts of work placements. As she puts it:

> Discussing the presence of long-established gendered binaries and mind-body dualisms between masculine rationality and feminine emotion which govern entry to professional spheres, Puwar argues that women can be perceived as a threat, representing 'foreign matter that threatens to contaminate the realm of serene, clean thought' (2004, p.17). This sense of female contamination was present in several participants' accounts, littered with metaphors of war and battle, territories and invasion …
>
> (Allen 2013: 242)

It is not surprising that historical accounts of early women screenwriters are also tinged with fears about female contamination. A number of references are made to the perceived 'tyranny of the woman writer' in the Hollywood studios of the 1930s (the quote itself comes from Frances Marion in Holliday 1995: 391). This is not unlike much more recently reported fears about the effects of female voices on mainstream cinema, echoing the kinds of sexist industrial knowledge Lucy Hay (2013) pinpoints, that women 'write too much about childbirth and losing your virginity'.

More generally, gendered accounts of horror, combat, competition and creative isolation evoke a set of views still routinely cited by contemporary writers like Writers B and F: that their work is never their own, that their writing is always at the behest of others, thus reinforcing their 'hired hand' status, their 'deficit identities' as Reynolds and Taylor (2005) term it. In Charlie Kaufman's evocation of his screenwriting persona in *Adaptation* (2002) deficit identities accrue to the white, male, overweight, unhappy screenwriter (the character refers to himself in a voiceover as 'pathetic', 'loser', 'fat') for comic and dramatic effect, especially considering Charlie Kaufman is now an extremely successful, visible and well-remunerated screenwriter. The kinds of deficit identities that so often accrue to women screenwriters are not nearly so easy to laugh off, like those of Bradley King,

Thomas Ince's chief scenario writer in Hollywood's studio era, speaking here about her professional life:

> I look back on the days when I was mistress of all jobs and tied myself to a typewriter for twelve hours out of twenty four; when I skipped meals and turned the ribbons of my hat – all that I might learn to write and force an opening for myself.
>
> (quoted in Holliday 1995: 45)

King refers here to missed meals, to trying to 'force an opening for myself' in an industry in which she remained largely invisible and unnameable. In fact, by the mid-1930s when she was struggling to get work, she joked to her agent about needing to take up plumbing and laundry (ibid.: 364). Deficit identities bestowed *by* men writers *to* women often denied even hired hand status. For example, Joan Harrison was just 'our secretary' (a description from Charles Bennett in McGilligan 1986: 36).

'Hired hand' creative status, screenwriters argue, would be unthinkable ('really inappropriate' said Writer F) for any other mode of authorship. As Writer E put it, tying the profession again to the language of the ego, '[this is] the worst industry for your ego as a writer, I very quickly realised that the writers were bottom of the heap'. As has already been noted, some writers interviewed for this project made direct links to histories of their profession and the authorial problems inherent in the work. In Chapter 3, Writer F said:

> You don't buy a piece of art and then go I think I'll have this repainted by Damien Hirst. If you want to commit to somebody's own personal project then you have to commit to it in a serious way. So there's a big problem and I think it's a historic problem, that writers started off as being studio hired hands.

Writer B expressed his feelings of fraudulence as they attach to writing-for-hire and the comfort of his individual craft-based skill-set:

> It's so easy to feel fraudulent when you're writing a story, when you're writing for hire, when someone has paid you, for allegedly your expertise, your ability. It's very easy to feel like a total fraud and that's the point at which recourse to tool-sets, as I think of them, becomes quite a useful psychological crutch.

The related and repeated notion of screenwriters as secondary, as fundamentally supplicative, is reflected in the 'know your place' discourse across screenwriting manuals and even in the screenplay as blueprint paradigm or the director-as-auteur model in film theory. Recall that Writer C summarized this position nicely:

> The key probably to being a happy collaborator is to be comfortable with the notion that as a screenwriter, you're the second most important person in the business. You need to pass the authorial baton to the director.

MacDonald's important work on screenwriting, outlined in Chapter 2, highlights the supplicant status of screenwriting work and the ways in which industry norms, circumscribed in screenwriting manuals for example, repeat and reiterate this: 'A writer learns and adopts normative practices in order to work within the industry and has no means of engaging critically with these practices unless they have sufficient status to do so' (MacDonald 2004a: 150). For MacDonald, 'a writer's general status in the workplace is as a supplicant, offering material and a level of skill to a market that is operated by others' (ibid.: 200).

Crucially, all the gendered subjects that appear in discourse and representations of screenwriting work are also self-responsible subjects: the pioneer, egotist, geek, supplicant. They must 'stay on top of it' or they suffer the effects (economic, psychological, physical, etc.) of 'trade pain' (Caldwell 2008) or what Gill and Pratt refer to as the 'individualized shame' (2008: 16) that is endemic across cultural production industries. As Chapters 3 and 4 illustrated, screenwriting workers are enterprising workers and subjective responses to horror or shame are also individualized: 'Get over it' as Writer G put it or: 'A lot of it comes down to naiveté on my part'. As Writer B explained pragmatically: 'It's on the screenwriter to find those [good] relationships and if the screenwriter is forced because of the stage in their career [to enter destructive relationships] … that's just cutting your teeth'. This again illuminates the neo-Foucauldian 'enterprising self' as Du Gay (1996) calls it, those individualized selves who must be proactive, must seek out good working relationships that afford a measure of professional autonomy but always risk insecurity in the process. From this angle, self-blame and 'individualized shame' are also 'common sense' and are just the way things are.

The deeper concern here, though, is that individualized shame is not distributed evenly, that 'ideal', performative screenwriting subjects work repeatedly to gender screenwriting work but also to deny inequalities and exclusions in this field, to make these inequalities 'unspeakable' as Gill (2011) argues. And if screenwriting work is often invisible or un-appreciated, then the gendered dimensions of that work are even more deeply obfuscated (as Ball and Bell 2013, also make very clear). Individualization – of horror and combat, as well as of success and rewards – also works to contain the possibilities for larger-scale collective resistance or long-term strategizing to alleviate continued and deepening inequalities across cultural industries. As Allen puts it:

> We must, however, also locate these responses [which deny gender inequality, sexism, etc.] within the specific context of the cultural industries where highly individualized working practices and a deep attachment to an image of the industry as liberal, egalitarian and inclusive mean that forms

> of collective organising, anti-discriminatory policies or a language of structural inequality are viewed as 'inappropriate hangovers' from the old economy (Banks and Milestone, 2011, p.79).
>
> (Allen 2013: 245)

Clearly, this industry and those within it are not operating in an organizational vacuum and the statistical data deployed in the first half of this chapter is now regularly gathered and publicized by worker organizations themselves – the US and UK Writers Guilds, Women in Film and Television (WIFTV) and other industry unions and organizations for example. But whilst diversity statistics across a range of indices clearly illustrate how unequal this industry still is, there is very little acknowledgement (none in screenwriting manuals) that inequality exists or needs attention. This has very real consequences as this chapter has shown, for what is funded, what is seen to be commercially and cultural viable and for what kinds of narratives and images appear in-script and on-screen. Statistics from many sources, industries and mediums indicate that the characters, settings and stories in mainstream film and television perpetuate stereotypes of gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality and do not reflect anything close to a real-world diversity of ethnicities, sexualities, ages, bodies or viewpoints. As this analysis indicates, this *also* has profound consequences for the kinds of professional languages and practices that are available and sanctioned for screenwriters. Inequalities in screenwriting work in many industries and places are visible and are working, at both structural and subjective levels, to ensure that screenwriting is still an exclusionary profession. This is by no means an exhaustive analysis of all of the structural and subjective dimensions of inequality for screenwriters, but the strength of this layered approach is that it explicitly connects the two: both dimensions are visible and are intertwined. This is crucial considering, as all the previous chapters have indicated, that inequalities and exclusions are so often *not* a part of the conversation when discussing screenwriting work and creative work more generally.

Conclusion

The screenwriting profession is still largely the preserve of older, white men. This profession is deeply unequal in terms of gender, ethnicity, class and age and the evidence in this chapter indicates that these inequalities are entrenched and, in some cases, are worsening. Not only are inequalities visible at a structural level, they are also visible at the many levels of screenwriting subjecthood. Ideal and everyday screenwriting workers are repeatedly constructed in discourse using a number of figures, traits and practices: the pioneer, the egotist or masochist, the horror story, the fighter, the supplicant. These are subjects and practices that can be traced through histories of the profession, in interviews with contemporary writers, in media coverage and within screen texts themselves. But these subjects and practices are not necessarily expressed or understood in terms of gender and inequality. They are taken for granted and

hegemonic expressions of self-oriented creative drive, of homophilic and heteronormative networking and relationship building, and they are implicitly gendered understandings of heroic, individual creativity. These kinds of 'common-sense' professional discourses and subjects then continue to mask exclusions and hierarchies. Banks and Hesmondhalgh (2009) and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) have recently argued that creative labor is uniquely positioned to enable 'good work'; that is, 'the production of goods that are often primarily aimed at pleasing, informing and enlightening audiences and in some cases, to the goals of social justice and equity' (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009: 419). But 'good work' does not seem to be a realistic prospect whilst this field is so unequal, is full of horror and combat, and in which the language of equity is often unavailable. In light of this discussion and the preceding chapters, the conclusion offers some cause for hope with a brief, exploratory discussion of some of the possible future(s) of screenwriting and, finally, an assessment of the possibilities for good work for screenwriters.

Notes

1 Ball and Bell (2013), in their discussion of this kind of 'numbers game', make the important point that contemporary statistics are now widely available for many industries and sectors but that statistics for earlier periods are much more difficult to accurately trace. Slide's (2012) re-assessment of the numbers of women writing for early Hollywood film is another example of this difficulty.
2 Although certainly not accessible to a range of ethnicities or class backgrounds for example.
3 Davis notes that the remaining 15.5 percent were credited to writing teams including both men and women.
4 This mirrors Holliday's findings about the ways in which early women screenwriters were framed and, thus, contained in the Hollywood press (1995: 328).
5 Out of the 32 titles analyzed in Chapter 4, four were written by women; see Appendix A.
6 See, for a good recent example, an interview with David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, the show-runners of HBO's *Game of Thrones* (2011–), who discuss their adolescent lives as fantasy lovers and 'Dungeons and Dragons nerds' on the KCRW program *The Treatment*. *Game of Thrones* has also been accused of sexism and racism in terms of both production dynamics and representational strategies, and the 'sexposition' of the show is also briefly, and flippantly, referred to in an interview with other references to 'getting laid'. See *The Treatment* (2013).

Conclusion

Screenwriting as good work

Perhaps now more than ever before, the present(s) and future(s) of screenwriting require intense forms of individual creative drive, entrepreneurialism and self-responsibility in order to chase down opportunities, score the next job and fend off the competition. If the languages of equity and discrimination are not widely available, as the previous chapter indicated, then screenwriting work also requires invisibility, the denial of sexism and racism, the denial of the continued inequalities in this field. Considering that this book began with an extended look at the early days of screenwriting, in which the discourses of freedom and multivalency served to underscore the creative potential of this form of work, what kinds of issues are now circulating and agitating within screenwriting work-worlds? To begin this conclusion, a number of issues for screenwriting work and workers are highlighted to provide a tenor for future-oriented discourses of screenwriting labor and practice.

Recall Bryan Cooke's words in the opening of this book: 'It's not like we're working in a coal mine!' (Writers Guild of America West 2013b). Cooke and his fellow writers for E! Channel's *Fashion Police* have been on strike in the USA, seeking fair pay and a measure of job security. A report on the strike and working conditions provides some telling detail:

> Most of the writers were never officially hired to work on the show. In fact, the network considered only two writers to be on staff; the other ten were part-time. But as each writer was called in week after week, the job required a bigger commitment. Their weekly assignment was to create up to 200 jokes each–twenty celebrity photos, eight to ten jokes per shot–which, according to writers, could take up to 35 hours a week, not including the writing marathons required for specials that follow the Oscars or Grammys. Most were paid $610 per week, and at least one writer with a few more decades of experience was getting $1,750 (a WGA contract would secure them $3,000 to $3,900 per episode).
>
> (Kohen 2013)

These writers are now immersed and complicit within a larger fight, Kohen goes on to argue, 'about whether the Writers Guild has the heft to represent its

members in an industry upended by the proliferation of cable programming, reality shows, and the entrance of new players (Netflix, Amazon), new platforms (Hulu, Apple TV) and new formats (webisodes)' (ibid.). This resonates with the closing reflections from London-based writers, in Chapter 3, on their mixed experiences with 'transmedia' programing. An overarching message across the ethnographic fieldwork for this project was that new platforms and technologies inevitably mean new opportunities, that there's 'no excuse' now, for not pursuing screenwriting dreams in whatever form or medium. For the *Fashion Police* writers and many others in these new 'unscripted' realms, however, new opportunities also lead to deeper forms of exploitation and competition. The *Fashion Police* writers have incidentally all already been replaced, and the 'show goes on', scripted by a new group of non-unionized writers.

Competition at the blockbuster end of the Hollywood market has also witnessed a curious revival with the announcement in February 2013 that Universal Studios has hired two screenwriters to write separate, 'dueling' scripts for a reboot of *The Mummy* franchise. A Universal 'insider' was quoted at the time about the division of labor for this project, one that is reminiscent of the simultaneous scripting practices of studio-era Hollywood. Particularly noteworthy here is not only the division of labor but the gendered, violent language used to describe it:

> "My suspicion is that one of them will be a 'structure-and-body' man, and one's going to be a 'character-and-dialogue' man – and that they'll then just gang-bang them together into one script, crediting both writers," explains our insider, adding that this competitive screenwriting process is rarely used "because credit arbitration is usually a nightmare".
>
> (Brodesser-Akner 2013)

Dire pronouncements have also been made recently about the state of the British industry for screenwriting. 'Where have all the British screenwriters gone?' asked Phil Parker in 2009 in a *Screen Daily* article in which he lamented the increasingly conservative and dysfunctional development culture within the British film industry. Parker went on:

> This generation has created a culture based on simplistic notions of screenwriting and development theory learnt on script-guru weekends and driven by producers, and directors who know that cast and/or budget, sometimes just a saleable idea, are the key to getting a film funded, not the quality of the screenplay.
>
> (Parker 2009)

Writing in the *Guardian* in 2011, Heather Peace lamented the changing production culture of the BBC in which, she argued, managers are now nurtured instead of writers and 'a supermarket-style production line for long-running crime or hospital series and soaps' prevails. In this climate, Peace argued, the

best writing is being distributed and screened on YouTube or Amazon Studios because the 'slots aren't there' (see Peace 2011). Whilst aspiring and experienced writers are seeking out these new platforms and spaces (platforms with uncertain or non-existent models of remuneration), some hopeful new platforms for the ostensible production and promotion of screenwriting and screenwriters have also developed, platforms that might offer a corrective to industrial conservatism. For example, the BBC now has an online 'Writers Room' used to 'identify and champion new talent and diversity across BBC drama, entertainment and children's programming' (BBC Writersroom 2013).[1] In a more entrepreneurial and commercial spirit, 'The Black List', once an annual Hollywood industry survey to 'hype' the most popular unproduced screenplays, has expanded into 'The Black List 3.0', becoming a full-service, networked, script evaluation tool. Screenwriters can now sign up as members, pay $US25 per month,[2] and upload their speculative scripts onto the site. 'The Black List 3.0' then hosts the scripts and makes them available to a subscriber base of over 1,000 industry professionals who range 'from major and mid-major agency assistants to studio presidents of production and A list directors and producers' (The Black List 2013). The site has produced a set of evaluative tools that enable ratings of individual scripts by both industry professionals and hired readers. These are the 'ideal' tools and writing strategies offered in the how-to manuals of Chapter 4: catchy loglines and 'hooks', generic categories and memorable characters and settings.

How-to gurus such as Robert McKee and Syd Field are becoming further enmeshed within and across new discursive platforms for the delivery of how-to advice. In the *Final Draft* screenwriting software package, for example, gurus such as Field now act as 'interactive problem solvers'[3] and guru voices are now circulated across dedicated how-to websites such as 'Go Into the Story', the official blog for 'The Black List 3.0' (see Myers 2013). Guru authors have their own subscriber-based how-to websites and apps, such as Robert McKee's *Storylogue* and Syd Field's *Scriptor* and, again, fears have been very recently expressed about the undue influence of particular gurus on Hollywood filmmaking. As Suderman argued in *Slate* in 2013 in relation to the popularity of the guru author Blake Snyder:

> Snyder's beat sheet has taken over Hollywood screenwriting. Movies big and small stick closely to his beats and page counts. Intentionally or not, it's become a formula—a formula that threatens the world of original screenwriting as we know it.

If 'The Black List 3.0' is an example of a new digital, networked and user-pays realm for the circulation of screenwriting work, it has also expressed something of an ongoing commitment to addressing and alleviating inequalities in screenwriting work. For example, after pressure from writers and commentators (such as Davis 2012a), the evaluation service integrated new scripting tags including 'female protagonist' and 'Bechdel Test' so that writers using their site

to upload scripts can identify their work as written by or featuring women.[4] 'The Black List 3.0' also announced a partnership with Warner Brothers in 2013 in a joint scheme to promote diversity in the screenwriting profession:

> We are pleased to partner with Warner Bros. to further diversity within their screenwriting ranks by identifying up to four diverse screenwriters who have not yet earned $25K in aggregate for their screenwriting work to receive a two-step WGA-minimum blind deal (over $90,000).
>
> (see Boone 2013)

'The Black List 3.0' expressed its commitment to various indices of inequality via *Twitter*: '@theblcklst: For the @WBPictures blind deal partnership, diversity includes many communities defined by race, gender, age, etc.' (see Boone 2013). In an example of collegial spirit, online commentators offered further clarification for professional and aspiring writers interested in this partnership, highlighting the fine print of the deal:

> The Warner Bros. Blind Commitment Agreement link above provides the nitty-gritty legal details on what this deal really entails for the select writers that Warner Bros. chooses. Basically, it gives Warner Bros. first crack at a screenwriter's ideas for a three-month period, but also allows Warner Bros. to pitch ideas to the select screenwriter during the same period to find a mutually agreed upon screenplay for the writer to write for the studio.
>
> (Boone 2013)

Boone's comments here, and the work of various writers and screenwriting teachers online, suggests a renewed desire to foster collegiality, share professional advice and agitate for real and lasting change – making screenwriting work more visible and drawing particular attention to the inequalities of the work. Twitter hashtags now enable writers to share screenwriting tips and techniques (#scriptchat) and discuss issues of screenwriting work and inequality (#bethechange). A 'Bitch List' has now begun as a direct response to the original 'Black List' to highlight unproduced screenplays written by women that pass the Bechdel Test (see The Bitch Pack 2013).[5] And it is quite clear that there are now many visible and successful women and ethnic minority show-runners and 'named' screenwriters of all kinds who are writing for film, for public service, network and cable television, for transnational channels and web channels. A very few might include Tina Fey (*30 Rock* 2006–13), Abi Morgan (*The Hour* 2011–12, *The Iron Lady* 2011) Jenji Kohan (*Weeds* 2005–12, *Orange is the New Black* 2013–), Shonda Rimes (*Grey's Anatomy* 2005–, *Scandal* 2012–), Jane Espenson (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* 1997–2003, *Husbands* 2011–), Jo Brand, Vicki Pepperdine and Joanna Scanlan (*Getting On* 2009–12) and Mindy Kaling (*The Mindy Project* 2012–). Many of these writers are no doubt aware of the normative homosociality and combativeness of screenwriting spaces. Jenji Kohan said in an interview recently: 'There's this cycle of abuse in a lot of

writer's rooms and productions and it doesn't have to be that way … You have to create a safe space' (National Public Radio 2013). Jane Espenson has used her blog for many years to share writing tips and advice and has recently run regular 'writing sprints' on *Twitter*, during which writers work on projects together and share that work in real time (see @JaneEspenson).

As Chapters 1 and 2 outlined, there is also evidence of new and renewed forms of political collegiality for screenwriters in the USA, UK and Europe. Particular manifestations of this range from the aforementioned E! *Fashion Police* writers' strike to the high-profile 2007–8 US writers' strike to more modest interventions such as the 2006 'European Screenwriters Manifesto'. These activities are all embedded in traditional forms of worker organization – guilds and unions – and all have asserted the need for 'good' work practice for screenwriters at a time in which the future of the screen production industries is undoubtedly unstable. As the examples and issues above indicate, screenwriting work now circulates across a range of media and increasingly via online platforms and this raises a number of politically volatile but very concrete questions about, for example, new models of remuneration for screenwriting work. In the European context, the Writers Guild of Great Britain has expressed great concern over the possibility of a 'single digital market' for European distribution of audio-visual products (this could lead to a more aggressive American work-for-hire system, an 'abomination' as the WGGB [2011] put it) and progress has also been made – the Writer's Digital Payments service with the BBC for example (see Writers Guild of Great Britain 2012).

'Good' screenwriting work

Thus, there is much to be both excited about and concerned with. There are a number of future(s) visible here – some in which the screenwriting labour force is more visible, more diverse, more autonomous, more able to exercise 'good' work; and some in which that same labour force is further bifurcated, exploited and self-exploitative, and more unequal and exclusionary. These various forms of 'good' and 'bad' work also very much connect to past practices and experiences, from horror stories or stories of creative collaboration to practices of inclusion and exclusion and the discourses that continue to promote certain bodies and voices. By way of conclusion to this study and following other scholars in the field, such as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), this last section considers what these practices and experiences might mean in terms of the ethics of creative work and, thus, the possibilities of 'good' work for screenwriters. Banks and Hesmondhalgh (2009) and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) have recently argued that creative labour is uniquely positioned to enable this 'good work'; as they describe it: 'the production of goods that are often primarily aimed at pleasing, informing and enlightening audiences and in some cases, to the goals of social justice and equity' (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009: 419). Screenwriting work could well exemplify this unique positioning, enabling, as many writers acknowledge, the chance to conceive, develop and

produce better visions of the world in-script and on-screen. Screenwriting – as an industrial, marginalized, individualized, collaborative and exclusive form of work – can highlight and also preclude some of the possibilities and problems associated with good creative work. The final question for this study then, is what would a model of 'good work' look like for screenwriting?

Possibilities for good work and related notions of autonomy and agency within media production studies have been illuminated in the recent and most compelling interventions within creative labor studies outlined in Chapter 2. Hesmondhalgh and Baker have in fact identified a 'normative vacuum' within much production and media industry studies that is partly a result of 'a more general tendency towards effacing reasonable normativity in post structuralist studies of work' (2011: 50). For these authors, studies of creative labor or media production often fail to sufficiently establish normative frameworks for good and bad work; or they reject the possibilities for normativity altogether. In their critical discussion, Gill and Pratt (2008: 19) make some reference to the need for normativity when they ask for 'principled criteria' that could be used to investigate the differences between forms of self-exploitation and experiences of genuine creative autonomy.

Many forms of patently 'bad' work are visible in this book: in the accounts of screenwriters' daily lives in Chapter 3, or in the elite testimonials from screenwriters in interview manuals in Chapter 4, or in experiences of structural inequality and exclusion in Chapter 5. But there have also been examples of 'good work', experiences of creative fulfilment, expressions of creative agency and reflexivity. The writers in Chapter 3 spoke of protecting scenes and scripts, much like the studio-era writers of Chapter 1. Or in Chapter 4, screenwriters use the how-to genre to increase their job security by developing a new income stream and a visible 'name' as a teacher and guru. And some of the subject positions outlined in Chapter 5, whilst marginalizing and limiting, do illuminate the struggles for agency and the differing forms of access that individual writers have to that agency in an industry that, as Writer E put it, is 'unreconstructed'.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) insist that normativity is key to studies of creative labor and this is a normativity that encompasses standards of good and bad work in both processes *and* products of cultural work. They also view autonomy as a crucial normative concept, noting that the subjective exercise and experience of professional autonomy[6] within creative work processes and the resulting creative products of those processes can establish those much-needed norms in any particular investigation. Drawing on all the lessons learned in this book, what would a normative model of screenwriting work look like? In the first instance, the general model established by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011: 36) is useful, one in which 'good work' is located in both process – fair pay, professional autonomy, self-esteem, interest and involvement, sociality and self-realization – and products – products that are 'excellent' and 'contribute to the common good'.

To elaborate this model in relation to the specificities of industrial screenwriting, two more documents can be usefully incorporated, documents that

originate from screenwriters and screenwriting organizations and have been referred to in previous chapters and by writers who took part in this project. First, the aforementioned 'European Screenwriters Manifesto' (2006) and, second, the Writers Guild of Great Britain's publication: 'Writing for Film: A Good Practice Guide' (2009). In Chapter 1, a few of the key tenets of the 'European Screenwriters Manifesto', published in 2006, were outlined. For example: 'The screenwriter is an author of the film, the primary creator of the audiovisual work' and, 'The indiscriminate use of the possessory credit is unacceptable'. The manifesto also calls for fair payment and the right for the screenwriter to be involved in the entire production process.

As well as this, in 2009, the Writers Guild of Great Britain (WGGB) released their 'Writing for Film' guidelines offering 'good practice' and contract advice for screenwriters writing films in the UK as well as advice for those working with writers. The aims of this document include: 'to encourage co-operation and good working relationships between writers and other film-makers', 'to enhance the rights and status of writers in the development and production process', 'to safeguard original work' and to offer practical guidance as to 'what writers should expect, seek or accept in negotiating contracts and working on scripts' (Writers Guild of Great Britain 2009: 3). As well as offering detailed advice about the standard contracts offered to writers in the world of British film production, the WGGB also suggested a 'Joint Venture Agreement' that they characterize as a 'positive response to the relentless downward pressure on film budgets and the dearth of development finance'. The joint venture agreement would 'place the writer at the heart of a project as an equal *rather than a hired hand*' (Writers Guild of Great Britain 2009: 28; my emphasis). These documents illuminate a normative framework for 'good practice' and, thus, good work for those writing and working with writers – fair pay (and due credit), professional autonomy (name recognition, authorial rights maintained throughout a production process), self-esteem (linked to integrity, recognition, mutual respect), interest and involvement (in the full production process, fair contracts, comprehensive information provided on those contracts and copyright deals), sociality (fair and honest working relationships, capacity to collectively organize) and self-realization (made possible via all these processual elements). And good work for screenwriters, by extension, also resides in their products – excellent screen productions that carry the writers' names, productions that connect with audiences, with peers, with producers.

What is still not explicitly mentioned in this model, though, is a consideration of equity and without that, especially considering both the structural and subjective dimensions of inequality outlined in this book, any normative model of creative labor is incomplete and, perhaps, deeply compromised. Good work for screenwriters and their process and products *also* means that the continued, deepening inequalities and exclusions in this field must be visible, must be a routine part of the conversation about *any* kind of creative practice and especially, as this study has shown, must be included in all our understandings and experiences of screenwriting work. Experiences of sexism and racism embedded

within the histories of the profession, for example, need to be connected to contemporary experiences of those self-same forms of discrimination. Structural inequalities need to be made visible, understood and 'speakable'. These inequalities also need to be connected to subjective, personal accounts of the work and its pleasures and pains, as this analysis of screenwriting work has done. Strategies to alleviate those inequalities are urgently needed and need to be shared and supported by writers and those who work with writers. Thus a model of good work for screenwriters must include fair pay, professional autonomy, self-esteem, interest and involvement, sociality and self-realization. But for all of this to be possible and meaningful, this model needs to make exclusion visible and speakable. Good work for screenwriters must also prioritize inclusion and a sociality that is premised upon equality and diversity. And good products for screenwriters must showcase a full diversity of voices, bodies and experiences and, thus, speak to diverse audiences, peers and producers.

As this study has shown, screenwriting is often viewed as the least creative form of writing because of a number of reasons: its prescriptions and formulae that are expounded and repeated in how-to manuals or testimonials from 'successful' writers; its commercial obligations that require writers to 'always say Yes' or to write for the teenage male audience; its inherent collectivity that downplays and denies claims to individual creative authorship; and its marginality and invisibility in comparison to other kinds of writers or filmmakers. Understanding screenwriting as creative labor and professional practice is about understanding these complexities and limits, because these determine who has access to screenwriting work and how that work is experienced. In this book, the complex relationship between experiences and discourses of craft and creativity have been articulated, as have the corresponding connections between individualized and collaborative forms of work and practice. Screenwriting in this book requires and enacts forms of work that are both wholly individualized and atomistic and are also collaborative, sometimes collegial. This creative labor is also tightly circumscribed by the how-to genre that regulates the profession through a particular set of hegemonic codes and conventions including structure, characters, conflict, entrepreneurialism and precariousness.

This study has also illustrated that contemporary orientations and understandings of creativity and creative work are about the exercise of discipline and power in relation to both industries and subjects. Thus, whilst screenwriting may offer a wealth of benefits and attractions, those exciting 'ins' need to be connected to the disturbing, intractable 'outs'. Screenwriting is also exclusionary, hirerarchized and gendered. It is a profession that is accessible to very few and is circumscribed and delimited in many ways. Because of this, grand pronouncements of creative freedom, autonomy and collaborative, creative spark need to be critically interrogated. Screenwriting work-worlds are rife with handy aphorisms and industry knowledge, none more so than 'Nobody knows anything' (Goldman 1983). As this book makes clear, we do actually know a huge amount about screenwriting, about how it originated and how it has developed and changed. We know something about the tenor and patterns

of writers' daily lives and we know about the particular appeals and difficulties of the work. We know about the discourses that determine what 'ideal' screenwriter-entrepreneurs should 'work on' in order to make it, to rise to the top, to be successful. And we know what successful writers think about their experiences and their collaborations, both 'good' and 'bad'. We know what kinds of myths and subjects link up writers past and present: the pioneer, the egotist, the masochist, the geek. We know these are gendered and that the screenwriting workforce is one that is highly unequal and exclusionary. This is crucial knowledge that helps us to see what kinds of deeply held attachments and experiences characterize the conception and production of screen narratives and screen culture. All this knowledge can and must foster and promote more of the 'good' work for screenwriters, more equitable and diverse work-worlds, more visions of the world we can share.

Notes

1 The site hosts script competitions (such as for the important Trans Comedy award, founded in 2012), a script library, advice columns and interviews with writers.
2 'The Black List 3.0' also has a stable of 'hired readers' who will read and evaluate single scripts for a $US50 fee, so a baseline cost for the evaluation of an uploaded screenplay is actually $US75+ (see The Black List 2013).
3 See: http://sydfield.com/scriptor/ (accessed 8 December 2013).
4 The Bechdel Test, or Bechdel-Wallace Test, is 'a diagnostic about the state of representations of women in pop culture in aggregate' but is often used to refer to the representative numbers of women in film and television. See Evans (2013) for a full summary and further indicative links.
5 'The Bitch List' is a problematic name considering, as Chapter 5 noted, the many ways in which women screenwriters have been contained and denigrated over time. Note that in this case, the letters purportedly stand for: Brilliant, Intriguing, Tenacious, Creative, Heroines. See The Bitch Pack (2013).
6 They also discuss aesthetic autonomy (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011: 39–43).

Appendix 1

How-to titles and authors

Title	*Author*	*Category*
Screenwriting Updated	Aronson (F)	First tier – guru
Fade In: The Screenwriting Process	Berman (M)	Second tier
Stealing Fire from the Gods	Bonnett (M)	Second tier
The Seven Basic Plots	Booker (M)	First tier – guru
The Secrets of Screenplay Structure	Cowgill (F)	Second tier
Alternative Screenwriting	Dancyger and Rush (M, M)	Second tier
Screenwriters on Screenwriting	Engel (M)	First tier – interviews
Oscar-winning Screenwriters on Screenwriting	Engel (M)	First tier – interviews
Crafty Screenwriting	Epstein (M)	Second tier
Screenplay	Field (M)	First tier – guru
Selling a Screenplay	Field (M)	First tier – guru
How to Make Money Screenwriting	Friedmann (M)	Second tier
Adventures in the Screen Trade	Goldman (M)	First tier – guru (part memoir)
Raindance Writers Lab	Grove (M)	Second tier
The Sequence Approach	Gulino (M)	Second tier
Writing Screenplays that Sell	Hague (M)	Second tier
Screenwriting 101	Hicks (M)	Second tier
Screenwriting for a Global Market	Horton (M)	Second tier
Screenwriting	Hunter (M)	First tier – guru
The 101 Habits of Highly Successful Screenwriters	Iglesias (M)	First tier – interviews
Story	McKee (M)	First tier – guru
The Art and Science of Screenwriting	Parker (M)	First tier – guru
Good scripts, Bad scripts	Pope (M)	Second tier
Making a Good Script Great	Seger (F)	First tier – guru
Save the Cat!	Snyder (M)	Second tier
Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters	Tierno (M)	Second tier
The Screenwriters Bible	Trottier (M)	Second tier
The Screenwriters Handbook	Turner (M)	Second tier
The Writer's Journey	Vogler (M)	First tier – guru
Power Screenwriting	Walker (M)	Second tier
Gardner's Guide to Screenwriting	Webber (F)	Second tier
Successful Screenwriting	Wolff and Cox (M, M)	Second tier

Appendix 2

Indicative publishing information for five 'guru' how-to texts

Text and author	*Publishing information*	*Author background*	*Readership and sales figures*
Screenplay by Syd Field	First published 1979 by Bantam now Bantam Dell (Random House).	Field has written 7 texts in total. Began career as a television writer and taught at USC.	Four editions of *Screenplay*. 500,000 in print in 2006 (Deahl 2006).
Screenwriting Updated by Linda Aronson	First published 2001 by Silman James Press (USA).	Aronson has written 4 texts in total. Has worked as a film, television and fiction writer.	*Screenwriting Updated* now superseded by new text *The 21st Century Screenplay* although original text still in print.
Story by Robert McKee	First published 1997 by Methuen (Harper Collins).	McKee began as a film writer, then developed his 'Story' seminar at USC before publishing *Story* in manual form.	*Story* is in its nineteenth printing in the USA and its fourteenth in the UK (www.mckeestory.com).
How to Make a Good Script Great by Linda Seger	First published 1994 by Samuel French Trade (USA).	Seger has written 9 texts in total. She is also a script consultant and delivers screenwriting seminars.	Three editions of *Making a Good Script Great* and 250,000 copies sold in 2006 (Deahl 2006).
The Writer's Journey by Christopher Vogler	First published 1998 by Michael Wiese Publications (USA).	Vogler studied and taught at USC and also works as a script consultant.	Three editions of *The Writer's Journey*. The first two editions sold 200,000 in USA (www.mwp.com).

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